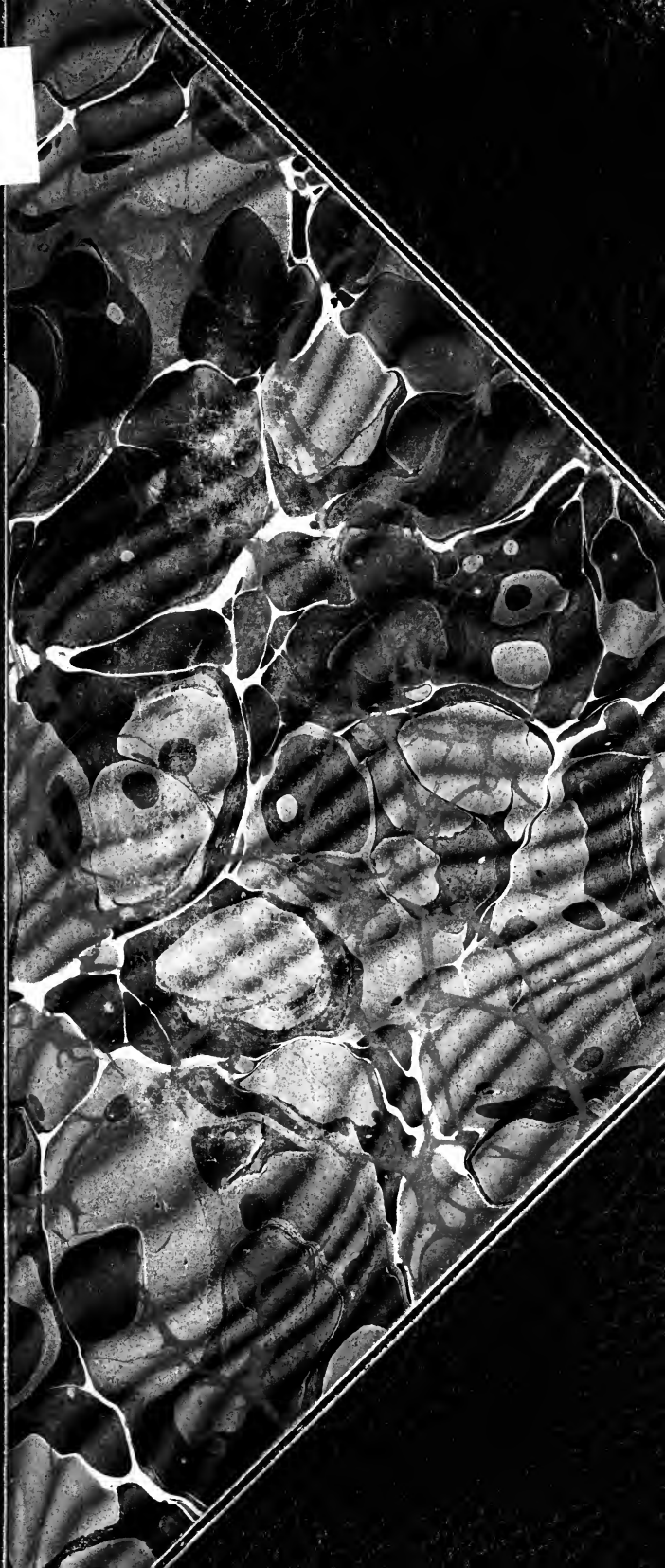


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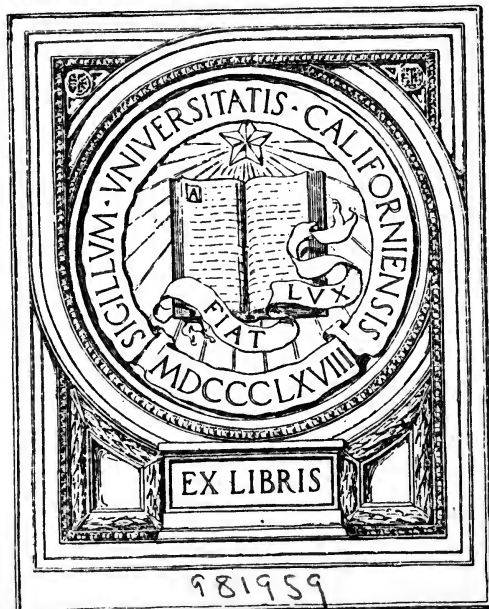




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Mary J. L. McDonald



IN MEMORIAM  
Mary J. L. Mc Donald



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THE COMPLETE WRITINGS OF  
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

*Edition de Luxe*

WITH PORTRAITS ILLUSTRATIONS  
AND FACSIMILES

IN SIXTEEN VOLUMES  
VOLUME XV











LETTERS  
OF  
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

EDITED BY CHARLES ELIOT NORTON



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME II

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LETTERS OF  
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL



# LETTERS OF JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

## IV

1856-1865

*Return from Europe. — Enters upon the duties of his professorship. — Marriage to Miss Dunlap. — Editorship of the "Atlantic Monthly." — New series of "The Biglow Papers." — Joint editorship of the "North American Review." — The "Commemoration Ode."*

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IN the summer of 1856 Lowell returned from Europe, and in the autumn entered upon his regular duties as professor. Admirably accomplished as he was for their performance, and fitted, by sympathy with youthful students no less than by natural gifts and acquired learning, for the post of teacher, he nevertheless found its exactions irksome, and the demand

which it made upon him such as to interfere more or less with the free exercise of his poetic faculty. His lectures during the twenty years in which he held the professorship had a wide range through the fields of Modern Literature, and were such as college students have rarely had the good fortune to hear.

In the summer of 1857 the happiness of his life was renewed by his marriage to Miss Frances Dunlap. She was a woman of remarkable gifts and graces of person and character, and from this time, for many years, their domestic life was of exceptional felicity.

In the autumn of the same year he undertook the editorship of the "Atlantic Monthly," a new venture, which under his guidance speedily took the leading place among American literary periodicals. He held the position of editor for nearly four years, devoting much time to its duties. Shortly after resigning its editorship into the competent hands of Mr. James T. Fields he became joint editor with me of the "North American Review," which, mainly through his contributions to its pages, regained its old distinction as an organ of the best contemporary thought in America.

During the years of the Rebellion his writings were among the most powerful and effective expressions of the sentiment and opinions of the North. Once more Hosea Biglow ut-



tered the voice of the people; and at the end of the war the "Commemoration Ode" gave expression in its nobly inspired strophes to the true heart of the nation. Few poets have ever rendered such service to their country as Lowell rendered in these years.

*To H. W. Longfellow*

CAMBRIDGE, *August 16, 1856.*

My dear Philoctetes, — I was not, I confess, half so sorry for your accident as I ought to have been, because it will give you to me as a neighbor for some time longer.<sup>1</sup>

I should have come down <sup>2</sup> to see you whether you had asked me or not, but it was particularly pleasant to find your welcome awaiting me here. I shall come Monday if possible.

I am enjoying the academic delights from which you too early withdrew yourself — being pursued by the entire Teutonic, Swiss, Hungarian, Polish, and other emigrations, who are all desirous (especially the last three) to teach the German tongue at Cambridge. I have done nothing since my return but read certificates in various unknown tongues and stand at bay, protecting myself with a cheval-de-frise of English.

<sup>1</sup> Longfellow had been prevented by a lameness from an intended voyage to Europe.

<sup>2</sup> To Nahant, on the seashore, where Longfellow was spending the summer.

green to yourselves over there—but there never was a greater mistake. The fates have given us an exceptional August—so unlike the common ones that I don't believe even the oysters found out what *r*-less month it was—rain every other day, so that trees and grass are like June, while at the same time we have the ripeness of the middle-aged year instead of the girlishness of a season in its teens. . . . The hills that you see beyond Charles as you go towards Boston are superb, and then we have all the while those glorious skies of ours, with the clouds heaped up like white foam-bursts to set them off in full perfection. And the sunsets! Europe has lost the art of shining skies as of staining glass—or is it that our unthrift New World squanders like a young heir just come into his estate, while grandam Europe is growing close-fisted? Is our Nature Venetian with her gorgeous color, or only Indian, painting herself savagely with the fiercest pigments?

I am delighted with your *matriotism*. “Rome, Venice, Cambridge!” I take it for an ascending scale, Rome being the first step and Cambridge the glowing apex. But you would n't know Cambridge—with its railroad and its water-works and its new houses. You remember our bit of Constantinopolitanism—the burnt-out shell of the school-house on the Common? It is gone, and a double house stares like

an opera-glass in its place. Think of a car passing our corner at Elmwood every fifteen minutes! Think of the most extraordinary little "Accommodation" — an omnibus that holds four, with an Irish driver whose pride in it is in the inverse ratio of its size — to carry one to the cars! Think of a reservoir behind Mr. Wells's! And then think of Royal Morse and John Holmes and me in the midst of these phenomena! I seem to see our dear old village wriggling itself out of its chrysalis and balancing its green wings till the sun gives them color and firmness. Soon it will go fluttering with the rest over the painted garden of this fool's paradise, trying to suck honey from flowers of French crape. For my part, I stick where I was, and don't believe in anything new except butter.

To-morrow (for there is a gap of a week in this letter) we are to inaugurate Greenough's Franklin with a tremendous procession — which I look at solely from a Mabelian point of view. Did I say solely? Well, let it stand. But I may just mention that the American Academy comes in before the governor, and Charles perhaps can tell you who *some* of the fellows are. *It is thought* that they will find carriages provided for them. That under these circumstances I should find composure to write to you is a curious biological (I believe that's the word now) fact. There are to be two addresses and

an oration. Only think how interesting! and we shall find out that Franklin was born in Boston, and invented being struck with lightning and printing and the Franklin medal, and that he had to move to Philadelphia because great men were so plenty in Boston that he had no chance, and that he revenged himself on his native town by saddling it with the Franklin stove, and that he discovered the almanac, and that a penny saved is a penny lost, or something of the kind. So we put him up a statue. *I* mean to invent something — in order to encourage sculptors. How to make butter from cocoanut milk, for example — or, by grafting the cocoanut with the breadfruit-tree, to make this last bear buttered muffins. Or, still better, if I could show folks how to find the penny they are to save. That has always been my difficulty. Or would it be enough to do as the modern poets, who invent the new by exaggerating the old, and be original by saying a *dollar* saved is a *dollar* lost — or we shall never feather our nests from the eagles we have let fly? . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

CAMBRIDGE, *September 16, 1856.*

. . . I have just come in from a walk up the little lane that runs down behind the hill to Fresh Pond. It is one of the few spots left

*something* like what it was when I was a boy, and I can pick hazelnuts from the same bushes which brought me and the chipmunks together thirty years ago. I really think it is bad for our moral nature here in America that so many of the links that bind us to our past are severed in one way or another, and am grateful for anything that renews in me that capacity for mere delight which made my childhood the richest part of my life. It seems to me as if I had never seen nature again since those old days when the balancing of a yellow butterfly over a thistle-broom was spiritual food and lodging for a whole forenoon. This morning I have had it all over again. There were the same high-heaped shag-bark trees, the same rosebushes with their autumn corals on, the same curving golden-rods and wide-eyed asters, the same heavy-headed goatsbeard, the same frank blue sky, the same cloud-shadows I used to race with, the same purple on the western hills — and, as I walked along, the great-grandchildren of the same metallic devil's-darning-needles slid sideways from the path and were back again as soon as I had passed. Nature has not budged an inch in all these years, and meanwhile over how many thistles have I hovered and thought I was — no matter what; it is splendid, as girls say, to dream backward so. One feels as if he were a poet, and one's own *Odyssey* sings itself in

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one's blood as he walks. I do not know why I write this to you so far away, except that as this world goes it is something to be able to say, "I have been happy for two hours." I wanted to tell you, too, what glorious fall weather we are having, clear and champagny, the north-west wind crisping Fresh Pond to steel-blue, and curling the wet lily-pads over till they bloom in a sudden flash of golden sunshine. How I do love the earth! I feel it thrill under my feet. I feel somehow as if it were conscious of my love, as if something passed into my dancing blood from it, and I get rid of that dreadful duty-feeling — "what right have I to be?" — and not a golden-rod of them all soaks in the sunshine or feels the blue currents of the air eddy about him more thoughtlessly than I.

I wish I could reach you a cup of this wine over those briny leagues. I drink your health in it, and then the glass shatters as usual. . . .

. . . You ask about me. I have not begun to lecture yet, but am to deliver my old Lowell Institute Course first and then some on German Literature and Dante. . . .

*To C. F. Briggs*

CAMBRIDGE, September 18, 1856.

My dear Friend, — No greeting could go to my heart straighter than yours, and yet I have let all these days slip by without returning it —



not a day, though, without thinking of you and *meaning* to write.

I am back again and not back again — that is, I am in Cambridge, but not at Elmwood. . . . I am at Dr. Howe's. . . . Cambridge is looking her best — the autumn rains keep us green as England.

About Page. He is grown older in face and hair (or want of it, rather), but is the same beautiful enthusiast. Just now it is Swedenborg whom he insists on decanting for you all the time. Naturally I wanted to see Page and not Swedenborg, so it was rather a bore, because I could not get *en rapport* with him. He has painted a Venus which all the galleries in Europe would contend for if it were by Titian — but why a Venus? It is his everlasting luck or destiny or whatever it may be — his want of *taste* I think we must call it. That seems to me his weak point. . . .

He is painting better than ever, but the artists say that he uses too much boiled oil, and that his pictures *must* grow black. Some I have already seen which had reached a mulatto stage, and were on their way to perfect Uncle Toms, which, considering the prejudice of color, is a pity. He will prove to you that it can't be so, but his pictures never get so good a light as from the effulgence of his personal presence. However, I hope the Venus will stand, and if

she does, his monument is built beyond all time and chance. If he only had more taste! It is enough for his friends that *he is* great. It is enough for him if he paint a thing just as he sees it—never mind how ungraceful or unpoetical. . . .

We are going to elect Fremont, are n't we? It will be the best thing that has happened in my time. We shall begin to be a nation at last, I hope, instead of a clique, as hitherto—and a clique of gamblers, too. The country seems like a great *rouge-et-noir* table, of which the President is temporary banker. . . .

To C. E. Norton

CAMBRIDGE, January 30, 1857.

. . . I am very glad to hear that you are translating the "Vita Nuova." It is the best possible introduction to a transcendental understanding of the "Commedia." What an extraordinary threefold nature that was of Dante's! The more you study him the more sides you find, and yet the ray from him is always white light. I learn continually to prize him more as man, poet, artist, moralist, and teacher. Without him there were no Italy. And the Italian commentators forever twitching at his sleeve and trying to make him say he is of their way of thinking! Of *their* way, indeed! One would think he might be free of them, at least, in

Paradise. He becomes daily more clear and more mysterious to me. What a web a man can spin out of his life if a man be only a genius! Do you remember the fairy tale of the princess shut up in the room full of straw by the cruel step-mother? She must spin it and weave it into cloth of gold before morning, and because she *is* the true princess it turns to ductile gold under her fingers, while it remains despairing straw to all the rest. Well, I suppose the true prince is he who has a good purpose and never falters from it. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

Brevoort House (NEW YORK), February 9, 1857.

. . . After all, I got here too late for my first lecture, which *they* thought was to be on Tuesday and *I* thought was to be on Thursday — a difference of opinion which resulted in an audience and no lecturer. I am to try again next Thursday. . . .

I said something about this city being like Paris — or rather *not* like it. I have got the phrase I wanted now — it is *plaster* of Paris — a bad cast of a Bernini original. . . .

*To C. E. Norton (in Italy)*

CAMBRIDGE, March 21, 1857.

. . . Of course you have heard of the Dred Scott decision. I think it will do good. It

makes Slavery, as far as the Supreme Court can, national — so now the lists are open, and we shall soon find where the tougher lance-shafts are grown — North or South. Don't fail to read Justice Curtis's opinion<sup>1</sup> if you see it; it does him great honor, and will rank hereafter among the classics of jurisprudence. . . .

*To W. J. Stillman*

Kirkland St., CAMBRIDGE, May 14, 1857.

My dear Stillman, — Of course I wish you to come, only not yet — not till I have done with my lectures and can *see you* — not till the leaves are on the oaks and you can see *them*.

I am glad you do not forget me, though I seem so memoryless and ungrateful. I shall be better one of these days, I hope. While my lectures are on my mind I am not myself, and I seem to see all the poetry drying out of me. I droop on my rocks and hear the surge of the living waters, but they will not reach me till some extraordinary high spring tide — and may be not then. . . .

The apple trees are in blossom, but I have hardly had time to see them. Horse-chestnuts are in leaf, and linnets and robins sing. But there are not so many birds here as at Elmwood — not so many anywhere as there used to be, and

<sup>1</sup> In the Dred Scott case.

I think the cares of life weigh on them so that they can't sing. We have had only a day or two of warm weather yet. Spring seems like an ill-arranged scene at the theatre that hitches and won't slide forward, and we see winter through the gaps. Bring May with you when you come — remember that. . . .

*To the Same*

CAMBRIDGE, October 28, 1857.

My dear Stillman, — Thank you for your letters — especially that from among the dear old Adirondacks. Though written in pencil, it did my heart more good than my eyes harm — only it made me homesick to be back again,

“A-chasing the wild-deer and following the *row*.”

Your last I ought to have answered a week ago, but when I stop payment of letters I do it altogether and, like a man of honor, allow no favored creditors.

I should like the article very much. Make it about six or seven pages (print), and at the same time be as lively and as solid as you can. You may have full swing. This is like ordering so many pints of inspiration, eh? — as if Castaly were bottled up like Congress-water and sent all over the country for sale! Well, never mind, but make it as good as you can. Instructive articles should be sweetened as much as possible,

for people don't naturally like to learn anything, and prefer taking their information as much as they can in disguise.

Why did you not write me the enthusiastic letter you say that you suppressed? I should have been delighted with it. For God's sake, don't let your enthusiasm go! It is your good genius. When we have once lost it, we would give all the barren rest of our lives to get back but a day of it. Your letter would have hit the white, too, for I am as happy as I can be and thank God continually. I have known and honored my wife for years — but I find some new good in her daily. So you may be as warm as you like in your congratulations.

Did you accomplish much among the lakes? I long to see some results.

God bless you!

Affectionately yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To J. G. Whittier*

CAMBRIDGE, November 4, 1857.

My dear Whittier, — I thank you heartily for the ballad, which will go into the next number. I like it all the better for its provincialism — in all fine pears, you know, we can taste the old *pucker*.

I knew the story well. I am familiar with Marblehead and its dialect, and as the burthen

is intentionally provincial, I have taken the liberty to print it in such a way as shall give the peculiar accent — thus —

“Cap’n Ireson for his horrd horrt

Was torred and feathered and corried in a corrt.”

That’s the way I’ve always “horrd it” — only it began “Ole Flud Ireson.” What a good name Ireson (son of wrath) is for the hero of such a history!

You see that Tritemius is going the rounds. I meant to have sent you the proofs and to have asked you to make a change in it where these four rhymes came together (assonances, I mean), “door,” “poor,” “store,” “more.” It annoyed me, but I do not find that any one else has been troubled by it, and everybody likes the poem. I am glad that the Philistines have chosen some verses of mine for their target, not being able to comprehend the bearing of them. I mean I am glad that they did it rather than pick out those of any one else for their scapegoat.

I shall not let you rest till I have got a New England pastoral out of you. This last is cater-cousin to it, at least, being a piscatorial.

Will you be good enough to let me know how much Mr. Underwood shall send you? He will remit at once.

The sale of *Maga* has been very good, con-

sidering the times, and I think you will find the second number better than the first.<sup>1</sup>

Faithfully Yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

If you do not wish the burthen so spelt, will you write me?

*To W. J. Stillman*

CAMBRIDGE, December 30, 1857.

. . . I think you are a little hard on Ruskin — and it seems to me that he *is* a good logician, but bad *reasoner*. Give him his premises and he is all right. Now, in *Æsthetics* every man more or less assumes his premises and must do so — don't you see? . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

CAMBRIDGE, December 31, 1857.

My dear Charles, — At last! Like a true lazzarone as I am I have been waiting for sunshine before I wrote — I mean, for one of those moods that would make a letter worth sending; and such a mood is not dependent on mere

<sup>1</sup> The first number of the *Atlantic Monthly* was that for November, 1857. It contained Whittier's poem "The Gift of Tritemius," and Lowell's "The Origin of Didactic Poetry." But the most important poetical contributions to it were four of the finest of Emerson's poems: — "The Roman Girl," "The Chartist's Complaint," "Days," and "Brahma," the last of which was for a long while the object of the jests of the Philistines.



cheerfulness, but almost altogether on having nothing to do, so that one can have time to hatch one's thoughts fairly out as one goes along. Pen and paper are never inspiring to me as conversation sometimes is, — and I was born to sit on a fence in the sun, and (if I had my own way) in those latter days of May, when the uneasy bluebird shifts his freight of song from post to post, and the new green of spring is just passing from the miraculous into the familiar. . . .

For a lazy man I have a great deal to do. A magazine allows no vacations. What with manuscripts and proofs and what not, it either takes up or breaks up all one's time. . . .

But even the magazine has its compensations. First, it has almost got me out of debt, and next, it compels me into morning walks to the printing-office. There is a little foot-path which leads along the river-bank, and it is lovely; whether in clear, cold mornings, when the fine filaments of the bare trees on the horizon seem floating up like sea-masses in the ether sea, or when (as yesterday) a gray mist fills our Cambridge cup and gives a doubtful loom to its snowy brim of hills, while the silent gulls wheel over the rustling cakes of ice which the Charles is whirling seaward. So I get my bits of country and can feel like a rustic still, but I miss the winter-birds I used to see at home. I continue to think the marshes lovely, and this winter

they are covered with plump ricks, whereof some half-dozen standing on my own amphibious territory give me a feeling of ownership and dignity, albeit the hay does not belong to me. This only strengthens a faith I have long held, that we are only metaphysically and imaginatively rich as far as mere possession goes, and only actually so in what we give away. . . .

*To the Same*

CAMBRIDGE, *June 13*, 1858.

. . . About Rossetti I have not yet made up my mind. There is infinite suggestion in his poem, as there is in a cloud whose meaning changes under your eye and eludes you forever, leaving a feeling that something beautiful has been meant. My notion of a true lyric is that the meaning should float steadfast in the centre of every stanza, while the vapory emotions (protean in form as you will) float up to it and over it, and wreath it with an opal halo which seems their own, but is truly its own work. The shades of emotion over, there floats the meaning, clear and sole and sharp-cut in its own luminous integrity. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

CAMBRIDGE, *August 30*, 1858.

. . . Since I got your Berkshire letter I have come into an inheritance — I have had my life

insured for forty years — I have been chained by one leg — I have suffered the torture of the Boot — I have said disrespectful things of my great-grandfather — I have received no sympathy, but have been laughed at — I have laughed myself, sometimes on the wrong side of my mouth — in short, I have had an attack of the — no, I won't tell you what yet. I will prepare your mind. I will dignify it by poetic precedent. I may compare myself with Milton (in this respect). I may claim brotherhood with Gray and Walpole. In short, I have had the *gout*. I cannot escape the conclusion that I am a middle-aged man. I even fear that I shall have to wear a special shoe on my left foot. My verses will no longer be admired by young ladies of sixteen. On the other hand, I have been thinking over the advantages. I find by the books that (if nothing happens) I shall live long. That it "relieves the system" — which seems to be true, for I have not been so well for a year. That in the course of time I shall be able to write my name and keep my milk-score with my knuckles. That I shall always have an excuse for being as testy as I please. On the whole, I think the odds are in favor of podagra. The worst danger is that the eyes are liable to be painfully affected with *iritis* — a comprehensive Greek term implying that the eye-wrong-is. But this is more than set off by

the certainty that I shall never be subject to that *in-great-toe otio* to which Nereus, according to Horace, doomed the winds. (Since making these two puns I have carefully fumigated the paper, so that you need not fear infection.) As soon as my father heard of my trouble he came to see me, bringing a cyclopædia of medicine (from which he has selected a variety of choice complaints for himself), that my reading might be of an enlivening character. I do not find that there is any specific for the gout, but, on the *similia-similibus* principle, I eat "tomarters" daily. The disease derives its name (like *mons a non movendo*) from the patient's inability to *go out*. The ordinary derivation from *gutta* is absurd—for not only is the German form *Gicht* deduced from *gehen*, but the persons incident to the malady are precisely those who themselves (or their ancestors for them) have kept just this side of the gutter. I never heard that my great-grandfather died insolvent, but I am obliged to *foot* some of his bills for port. I can't help thinking that I shall be worse if I indulge any longer in this kind of thing—so I shall stop. . . .

To C. E. Norton

CAMBRIDGE, August 31, 1858.

. . . I have a notion that the inmates of a house should never be changed. When the

first occupants go out it should be burned, and a stone set up with "*sacred to the memory of a HOME*" on it. Suppose the body were eternal, and that when one spirit went out another took the lease. How frightful the strange expression of the eyes would be! I fancy sometimes that the look in the eyes of a familiar house changes when aliens have come into it. For certainly a dwelling adapts itself to its occupants. The front-door of a hospitable man opens easily and looks broad, and you can read Welcome! on every step that leads to it.

I stopped there and tried to put that into verse. I have only half succeeded, and I shall not give it to you. I shall copy it and thrust it into Jane's letter<sup>1</sup> — which is otherwise silly-bub that deserves to be whipped.

I meant to talk to you about Buckle's book. I have employed all the spare time of my gouty week in reading it through. Six hundred and seventy-two pages octavo! And only the beginning of the Introduction after all! Have you read it? If not, do. As Ellery Channing said of the Bible, "It is a book worthy to read." I don't think one can like it much or dislike it much, but one can learn something. It is a book of vast assumptions — as where he dismisses the whole question of the influence

<sup>1</sup> Printed in Lowell's Poems under the title of "The Dead House."

of Race in two lines or so, with the dictum that there is no such thing as hereditary propensities. Of course that's nonsense; but it has been useful to me to read a book written from a totally different point of view, for I was becoming quite a German in respect of Race, and inclined to settle all questions by that easy formula, which is also as tempting as it is easy. I think Buckle's book is going to exercise a vast influence on thought in this country, where we have a hundred hasty generalizers for one steady thinker. But if it do not lead to a stupid fatalism and a demand-and-supply doctrine for everything, it will do good. And I think that, properly understood and qualified, it would lead to no such results. It seems to me that the bane of our country is a profession of faith either with no basis of real belief, or with no proper examination of the grounds on which the creed is supposed to rest, and what I like about Buckle's book especially is that there is no *Buncombe* in it — that his conclusions, whether right or wrong (and many of them seem to me to be wrong and even dangerous), are set forth fearlessly and without passion. Perhaps the reason why I like the book is that I disagree with it so much as I do. At any rate, it is a book to be read, for it will certainly influence opinion. . . .

*To the Same*

CAMBRIDGE, October 11, 1858.

. . . My work for the last fortnight *mi ha fatto magro* in good earnest — the work and the worry of it. Phillips was so persuaded of the stand given to the Magazine by the Choate article that he has been at me ever since for another. So I have been writing a still longer one on Cushing. I think you will like it — though, on looking over the Choate article this morning, I am inclined to think that on the whole the better of the two. Better as a whole, I mean, for there are passages in this beyond any in that, I think. These personal things are not such as I should choose to do, for they subject me to all manner of vituperation ; but one must take what immediate texts the newspapers afford him, and I accepted the responsibility in accepting my post. I am resolved that no motives of my own comfort or advantage shall influence me, but I hate the turmoil of such affairs, despise the notoriety they give one, and long for the day when I can be vacant to the muses and to my books for their own sakes. I cannot stand the worry of it much longer without a lieutenant. To have questions of style, grammar, and punctuation in other people's articles to decide, while I want all my concentration for what I am writing myself — to have added to this personal ap-

peals, from ill-mannered correspondents whose articles have been declined, to attend to — to sit at work sometimes fifteen hours a day, as I have done lately — makes me nervous, takes away my pluck, compels my neglecting my friends, and induces the old fits of the blues. However, the worst is that it leads me to bore my friends when I *do* get at them. To be an editor is almost as bad as being President. So just take it for granted that I am hipped. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

CAMBRIDGE, *October 23, 1858.*

. . . As for reputation, it is only a stage crown at best, but it is more comfortable than the real one. Fame is really lovely and worth striving for, since it comes after death and others will enjoy it. I don't think I care much for reputation; but nobody knows till he has tried it, and I have never been sorely tempted that way. I should like to feel that my friends liked what I wrote and found some good in it — yes, more than that, I should like to have Mabel proud of being my daughter after I am gone. That would not need much, though; it is so easy to be proud. I can remember when it would have pleased me to have been illustrated even in "Harper's Weekly." Now it has happened to me, and I found myself criticising the drawings as if they had no reference to anything of my



own — an advance in wisdom, perhaps — but in happiness? I guess not. If I had studied less than I have I should value reputation more, but I know so well how much has been done excellently, and how an excellent thing ought to be done, that I do not value anything I do too highly, and in the end nobody's praise is good for anything but one's own. . . .

*To T. W. Higginson*

CAMBRIDGE, December 9, 1858.

My dear Higginson, — I like your article ' so much that it is already in press as leader of next number. You misunderstood me. I want no change except the insertion of a qualifying "perhaps" where you speak of the natural equality of the sexes, and that as much on your own account as mine — because I think it not yet *demonstrated*. Even in this, if you prefer it, have your own way.

I only look upon my duty as a vicarious one for Phillips & Samson, that nothing may go in (before we are firm on our feet) that helps the "religious" press in their warfare on us. Presently we shall be even with them, and have a *free* magazine in its true sense. I never allow any personal notion of mine to interfere, except in cases of obvious obscurity, bad taste, or bad grammar.

1 "Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet?"

As for your own contributions, I may say to you as I always have to Mr. Underwood, that they are just to my liking — scholarly, picturesque, and, above all, earnest — I think the most *telling* essays we have printed.

I have had occasion to think gratefully of you within a few days in reading the little volume of Chapman you gave me, and which has been of great value to me in enabling me to *settle* a point in which I take issue with Mr. [Grant] White. You will have proofs in a day or so. *Vale*. In the midst of devils of the press, hurriedly and heartily yours, J. R. L.

*To O. W. Holmes*

CAMBRIDGE, *December 19, 1858.*

My dear Wendell, — Thank you ever so much for the “Autocrat,” who comes at last drest like a gentleman. The color of the paper is just that which knowers love to see in old lace.

“Run out” indeed! — who has been suggesting the danger of that to you? I hope you will continue to run out in the style of the first “Professor.” The comparison of the bung and the straw is excellent and touched a very tender spot in me, who was born between two cider-mills, and drew in much childish belly-ache from both, turned now by memory into something like the result that might follow nectar.

You have been holding-in all this while — *possumus omnes*, we all play the 'possum — and are now getting your second wind. I like the new Professor better than the old Autocrat. You have filled no ten pages so wholly to my liking as in the January number. I have just read it and am delighted with it. The "Old Boston" is an inspiration. You have never been so wise and witty as in this last number. I hold up my left foot in token of my unanimity.

The religious press (a true sour-cider press with belly-ache privileges attached) will be at you, but after smashing one of them you will be able to furnish yourself with a Samson's weapon for the rest of the Philisterei. Good-by.

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To C. E. Norton*

CAMBRIDGE, 2d day of Holy Week,  
May, 1859.

. . . I miss you *like thunder* — *ça va sans dire*—especially in this George-Herbert's-Sunday kind of weather, which is cool and calm and bright as can be thought. I fancy you listening to the bobolinks among the lush grass on the lawn. I heard them yesterday on my way to the printing-office for the first time this spring. That liquid tinkle of theirs is the true

fountain of youth if one can only drink it with the right ears, and I always date the New Year from the day of my first draught. Messer Roberto di Lincoln, with his summer alb over his shoulders, is the true chorister for the bridals of earth and sky. There is no bird that seems to me so thoroughly happy as he, so void of all *arrière pensée* about getting a livelihood. The robin sings matins and vespers somewhat conscientiously, it seems to me — makes a business of it and pipes as it were by the yard — but Bob squanders song like a poet, has no rain song (as the robin has, who prophesies the coming wet that will tempt the worms out — with an eye to grub), and seems to have no other tune than, *mihi est propositum in taberna mori*, with a long unpaid score chalked up against him behind the door. He never forebodes or remembers anything, won't sing in wet weather, but takes a thoughtless delight in present sunshine. I am sure he leaves debts behind him when he comes up from Carolina in May. Well, you see I was happy yesterday on my way to Riverside. I indulged in my favorite pastime of sitting on a fence in the sunshine and basking. The landscape was perfect. . . . Sweet Auburn pink with new-leaved oaks, Corey's Hill green in the hay-fields and brown with squares of freshly turned furrows (*versus*, the farmer's poem), the orchards rosy with apple-

blooms, the flowering grasses just darkening the meadows to set off the gold of the buttercups, here and there pale splashes of *Houstonia* dropt from the Galaxy, and the river all blue and gold. This is Cambridge, sir! What is Newport to this? But I am bobolinking instead of attending to business. . . .

*To the Same*

CAMBRIDGE, *June 24, 1859.*

. . . Since I wrote, I have been down the harbor with the pilots in "The Friend." We went first to Hull and telegraphed the boat, which was cruising on the inner station. They could not come in for us at once, because they were on the lookout for the English steamer, so we had a chance to investigate Hull a little. It is a pretty little village cuddled down among hills, the clay soil of which keeps them densely green. The fields are broad and wholly given to grazing of cattle and sheep, which dotted them thickly in the breezy sunshine. Down in the village we found a fine stalwart fellow in a barn shearing sheep. This was something new to me, and, going away, I thanked the man for having shown me something I had never seen before. He laughed and said, "If you'll take off them gloves o' yourn, I'll give you a try at the practical part of it!" By Jove! he was right. I never saw anything handsomer than

those strong brown hands of his, on which the sinews were as tight as a drawn bow-string. I caught myself moralizing as usual, and the up-shot was, How much more admirable is this tawny vigor—the fruit of downright toil—than the crop of early muscle that heads out under the glass of the gymnasium. I believe I really love rough human nature. I felt that there was nothing uncivil in his gibe at my kids—only a kind of jolly superiority; but I did not like to be taken for a city gent, so I told him that I was bred in the country as well as he. He laughed again and said, “Wahl, anyhow I’ve the advantage of you, for you never see a sheep shore, and I’ve bin to the opera and shore a sheep myself into the bargain.” He told me that there were two hundred sheep in Hull, and that in his father’s day there used to be eight hundred. The father, an old man of near eighty, stood looking on, pleased with his son’s wit, as brown as if the Hull fogs were walnut-juice. Then we dined at a little inn with a golden ball hung out for sign—a waif, I fancy, from some shipwrecked vessel. The landlady was Mrs. Vining, a very amusing little personage, who brought her little girl to me, as I sat on the veranda after dinner smoking my pipe, and made her repeat utterly unintelligible verses. She informed me that her husband was “in business in the city,” and that he was

own cousin to Senator Sumner, their mothers having been sisters, "from Scitootit." A very elaborate sampler in the parlor — representing an obelisk on an island, with an expensive willow of silver thread overhanging it — recorded the virtues of Sumner's maternal grandfather and grandmother.

*June 29.*

So far I had written on the 24th when something interrupted me. I can't get hold of my thread again. But I met at Mrs. Vining's a tall California Yankee, who told me he "should n't mind Panáhmy's bein' sunk, ollers purvid-in' they warn't none of *our* folks onto it when it went down!" "Panáhmy" is Panama. Well, we went aboard the pilot-boat and cruised for vessels with a fine breeze. It came up to my notion of pleasure to be down the harbor with something to do and somebody else to do it for you. The next day I was up before sunrise, and got into a habit of early rising that lasted me all that day. We boarded a bark and a brig before breakfast. Then we saw Minot's Ledge lighthouse that is to be, went up to the top of Boston Light, saw the machinery, also had the fog-bell set in motion — were treated, in short, as if we had been Secretaries of the Treasury. Came home at night with a basket full of lobsters, the gift of Captain Dolliver, who is a noble fellow and weighs two hundred

and ten pounds — all which he risked last winter to save a man from a wrecked ship. Does it not require more heroism to venture two hundred weight than a paltry one hundred and forty odd?

Thank you for the "Times." It amuses me very much. First, because it is so preposterously Austrian — which is very well for you and me to keep us balanced — and second, because its editorials are so grandiloquently mouse-like and so luminously obscure. The debates are instructive. They don't seem to go any more to first principles in England than here — though their speeches are in better English. Mr. Bright shows a commendable familiarity with the "Models of Elegant Composition," for what he quotes is from a note. But I fear he thinks me too much of a Quaker. In my "Poems" there are some verses on "Freedom," written in '48 or '49 — I think '49. They ended thus as originally written. I left the verses out only because I did not think them good, not because I did not like the sentiment. I have strength of mind enough not to change a word, though I see how much better I might make it.

Therefore of Europe now I will not doubt,  
For the broad foreheads surely win the day,  
And brains, not crowns or soul-gelt armies, weigh  
In Fortune's scales : such dust she brushes out.



Most gracious are the conquests of the Word,  
 Gradual and silent as a flower's increase,  
 And the best guide from old to new is Peace —  
 Yet, Freedom, thou canst sanctify the sword !

Bravely to do whate'er the time demands,  
 Whether with pen or sword, and not to flinch,  
 This is the task that fits heroic hands ;  
 So are Truth's boundaries widened inch by inch.  
 I do not love the Peace which tyrants make ;  
 The calm she breeds let the sword's lightning break !  
 It is the tyrants who have beaten out  
 Ploughshares and pruning-hooks to spears and swords,  
 And shall I pause and moralize and doubt ?  
 Whose veins run water let him mete his words !  
 Each fetter sundered is the whole world's gain !  
 And rather than humanity remain  
 A pearl beneath the feet of Austrian swine,  
 Welcome to me whatever breaks a chain.  
*That* surely is of God, and all divine !

I think it must have been written in 1848, for  
 I remember that, as I first composed it, it had  
 "fair Italy" instead of "Humanity." . . .  
 Farewell.

Always your loving

J. R. L.

*To Miss Norton*

CAMBRIDGE, *Saturday*.

. . . Yesterday I began my lectures and came  
 off better than I expected, for I am always a  
 great coward beforehand. I *hate* lecturing, for I  
 have discovered (*entre nous*) that it is almost im-

possible to learn *all* about anything, unless indeed it be some piece of ill-luck, and then one has the help of one's friends, you know. . . .

*To Thomas Hughes*

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., *September 13, 1859.*

My dear Sir, — I have put off from time to time writing to you, because I hardly knew what to write. To say simply that I liked your writings would have been pleasant enough (though that would have given me no claim upon you that was not shared by all the world), but I find it particularly hard to write anything about a book of my own. It has been a particular satisfaction to me to hear, now and then, some friendly voice from the old mother-island say "Well done," of the "Biglow Papers;" for, to say the truth, I like them myself, and when I was reading them over for a new edition, a year or two ago, could not help laughing. But then as I laughed I found myself asking, "Are these yours? How did you make them?" Friendly people say to me sometimes, "Write us more 'Biglow Papers,'" and I have even been simple enough to try, only to find that I could not. This has helped to persuade me that the book was a genuine growth and not a manufacture, and that, therefore, I had an honest right to be pleased without blushing if people liked it. But, then, this very fact makes

it rather hard to write an introduction to it. All I can say is that the book was *thar* — how it came is more than I can tell. I cannot, like the great Goethe, deliberately imagine what would have been a proper *Entstehungsweise* for my book and then assume it as fact. And as for an historical preface, I find that quite as hard after now twelve years of more cloistered interests and studies that have alienated me very much from contemporary politics. I only know that I believed our war with Mexico (though we had as just ground for it as a strong nation ever has against a weak one) to be essentially a war of false pretences, and that it would result in widening the boundaries and so prolonging the life of slavery. Believing that it is the manifest destiny of the English race to occupy this whole continent and to display there that practical understanding in matters of government and colonization which no other race has given such proof of possessing since the Romans, I hated to see a noble hope evaporated into a lying phrase to sweeten the foul breath of demagogues. Leaving the sin of it to God, I believed and still believe that slavery is the Achilles-heel of our polity; that it is a temporary and false supremacy of the white races, sure to destroy that supremacy at last, because an enslaved people always prove themselves of more enduring fibre than their

enslavers, as not suffering from the social vices sure to be engendered by oppression in the governing class. Against these and many other things I thought all honest men should protest. I was born and bred in the country, and the dialect was homely to me. I tried my first "Biglow Paper" in a newspaper, and found that it had a great run. So I wrote the others from time to time during the year which followed, always very rapidly, and sometimes (as with "What Mr. Robinson thinks") at one sitting.

When I came to collect them and publish them in a volume, I conceived my parson-editor with his pedantry and verbosity, his amiable vanity and superiority to the verses he was editing, as a fitting artistic background and soil. It gave me the chance, too, of glancing obliquely at many things which were beyond the horizon of my other characters. I was told afterwards that my Parson Wilbur was only Jedediah Cleishbotham over again, and I dare say it may be so; but I drew him from the life as well as I could, and for the authentic reasons I have mentioned. I confess that I am proud of the recognition the book has received in England, because it seems to prove that, despite its intense provincialism, there is a general truth to human nature in it which justifies its having been written.

But life is too short to write about one's self in, and you see that I cannot make a suitable preface. I would rather have something of this kind: "It could not but be gratifying to the writer of the 'Biglow Papers' that Mr. Trübner should deem it worth his while to publish an edition of them in England. It gives him a particular pleasure that the author of 'Tom Brown's School Days' should have consented to see the work through the press, for the remarkable favor with which that work was received on both sides of the Atlantic proved that all speakers of the English tongue, however differing in other respects, agree wholly in their admiration for soundness of head and heart and manliness of character."

Now do not think this is "Buncombe."

Just behind me is the portrait of some fine oaks painted for me by an artist friend of mine.<sup>1</sup> He wanted a human figure as a standard of size, and so put me in as I lay in the shade reading. So long as the canvas lasts I shall lie there with the book in my hand, and the book is "Tom Brown." A man cannot read a book out of doors that he does not love. Q. E. D.

Allow me, then, to offer you a hearty grip of the hand over the water, and perhaps the fact that my only son lies under the daisies in Rome may justify me in offering to you and Mrs.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. J. Stillman.

Hughes my sympathy in your late terrible sorrow. With all good wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

P. S. It occurs to me that you may like the facts of my biography. Born in 1819 at Cambridge, where I have lived ever since, with the exception of two visits to Europe. Read law — never practised. Was chosen in '55 to succeed Ticknor and Longfellow as professor of Modern Literature in Harvard College.

*To T. W. Higginson*

CAMBRIDGE, October 24, 1859.

My dear Higginson, — You prevent my wishes. I was going to ask you for something. Editorially, I am a little afraid of [John] Brown, and Ticknor<sup>1</sup> would be more so. But perhaps I misunderstand you. Anyhow, as long as I edit I want you to write.

I don't quite agree with you about the last number. I think "Dog Talk" one of the cleverest articles I have printed — just on an easy, gentleman-like level that fitted the topic. It was written, I believe, by an officer in the English army — the same who wrote "The Perilous Bivouac" and "The Walker of the Snow." I liked them all. But heavens! could

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Ticknor & Fields had now become the publishers of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

you look into my drawers ! I do the best I can. As to my notice of Bartlett<sup>1</sup> — it would have been better had I ever kept notes of Yankeeisms. Groping for them in one's memory won't do, and I wrote with the printer's devil waiting in my best easy-chair and reading my newspaper before I had looked at it — perhaps the best Americanism of the lot.

Always truly yours,  
J. R. LOWELL.

*To Sydney H. Gay*

CAMBRIDGE, December 21, 1859.

My dear Sydney, — Your having edited a pirated edition of the "Biglow Papers" puts me in mind of what happened once to a classmate of mine. He owned a row of houses occupied by factory operatives. In some election imbroglio or other the said tenants had voted against their landlord, whereupon some Irish friends of his went and smashed in all their windows (a sort of Irish bull in a china-shop), and he was obliged to reset them next day. But never mind, I shan't lose much by it, and even if I should, I should be willing to pay something for the amusement of seeing on the title-page that the book had been "alluded to by Mr. Bright in Parliament." Only think of it ! it quite takes my breath away. But better

<sup>1</sup> Bartlett's *Dictionary of Americanisms*.

yet, what foretaste of immortality like being edited with philological notes? It makes me feel as if the grass were growing over me. . . .

. . . I am much obliged to you for wishing to see my verses oftener. One needs *time* and quiet to write good verses — I have neither. Remember Wordsworth's definition of poetry — "violent emotion re-collected in tranquillity." However, let me ask you to read "Italy, 1859," in December "Atlantic." My friends here like it. One of these days I mean to print another volume — perhaps two — one of verse and one of prose. But who knows? At present I am perfectly Grubstreet, but then I have the pleasure of earning every penny I spend, and that is next best to having a competence, which Billy Lee defined to be "a million a minute, and your expenses paid" — the only satisfactory definition I ever saw.

Why did you not let me see you when you were here? It would have been a great pleasure to me. I don't readily forget old friends, nor easily stop loving anybody I have ever loved. However, I have learned long ago not to expect more than three people to care for me at a time — maybe I'm extravagant in saying three.

Good-by.

Ever yours,

J. R. L.



*To Thomas Hughes*CAMBRIDGE, *St. Shakespeare's Day*, 1860.

My dear Sir, — It is ever so long that I ought to have written to you, but I look upon letters to men I value as in some sort sacred things, and would not (as we do with sacred things in general) fob them off with the fag ends of our time and mind. You have been too busy to know whether I wrote or not, and the only fear I had was that I might seem ungrateful. I think good gratitude a scarcer thing in this world than good verses, and wish in the heartiest way to express mine to you. I cannot help feeling that you were too friendly, but that is a fault one would be a churl to grumble at. I was a little startled to read my name in the list of the great satirists, and don't feel quite sure how they will take it. I hardly dare hope for that *salutevol cenno* with which the sacred procession of shadowy poets turned towards Dante. But I do take an honest pride and satisfaction in the praise of such as you. It is twenty years since I published my first volume, and during all that time I have dwelt in a sort of limbo — this side of downright damnation, it is true, but almost as far from unqualified success. When I received the copy of the "Biglow Papers," with your introduction, I was deeply touched, and ran to show it to my wife, who was as pleased

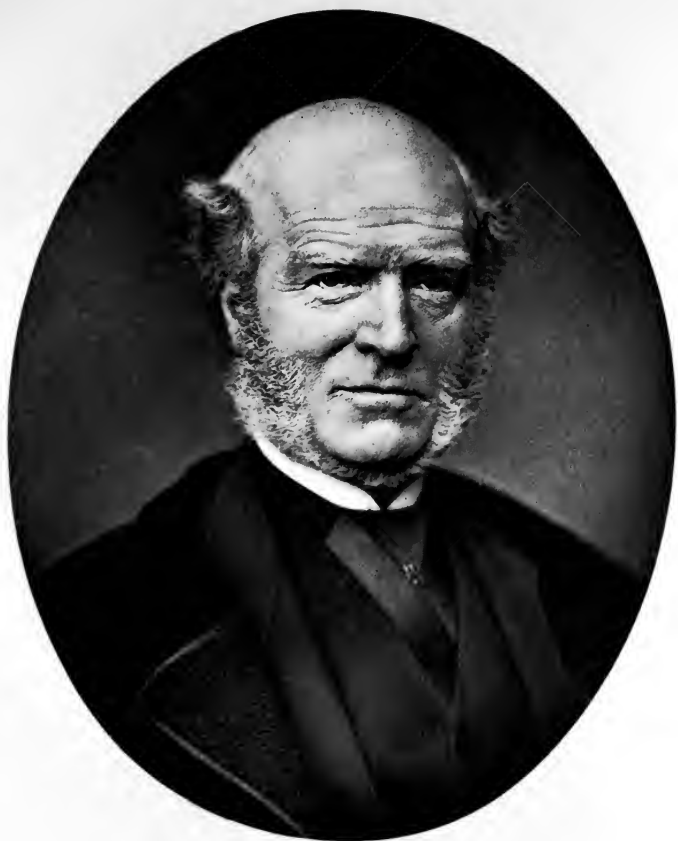
as I. I am too much gratified to allow it to be "exploited" as an advertisement, and have only allowed my intimate friends even to see it, for I will not have your kindness trailed through the mire of the newspapers.

You are quite right in thinking that I am none of the "peace at any price" men. I believe that Shakespeare has expressed the true philosophy of war in those magnificent verses in "The Two Noble Kinsmen," which are as unlike Beaumont and Fletcher as Michael Angelo's charcoal head on the wall of the Farnesina is unlike Raphael:—

"O great corrector of enormous times,  
Shaker of o'er-rank states, thou grand decider  
Of dusty and old titles, that heal'st with blood  
The earth when she is sick, and curest the world  
O' th' pleurisy of people!"

And if the bold Duval who now rules France (holding it virtue, when he steals a hundred pounds from the rich, if he give sixpence to the poor) should try to filch that "precious gem set in a silver sea," no one will exult more than I when the men whose bones were made in England teach him a severer lesson than his uncle learned on sea and land a half century ago. Though you English (most of you) insist on misunderstanding us Yankees, you must not think that we forget what blood runs in our veins.







I am greatly indebted to you for your kindness to Stillman. Don't be afraid that I am going to overwhelm you with letters of introduction. That is the first I ever gave to any one on your side the water, and I gave that because I thought you would be interested in the bearer. He can tell you all about our woods and hunters, and even among woodsmen is a great shot with the rifle. He is of good Puritan stock, and will interest you as a fair type of what the English race has become over here in two centuries of orphanage.

I am going to ask another kindness of you. A friend of mine <sup>1</sup> comes to England with commissions to draw some heads for some of us here. He is to draw Kossuth, Carlyle, Owen, Tennyson, and one other (whom I forget). Stillman will tell you that he is a masterly draughtsman. I hope you will consent to give so much of your time and patience as to let him draw you for me. If you do, I will ask you to write your name on the drawing. It will be in my study as long as I live, and then will go to our College here with some other portraits I have. I feel as if I had a right to send my kindest greetings to Mrs. Hughes, though I have never seen her. Stillman has written to me of her friendly attention to him. Let me hope you

<sup>1</sup> Mr. S. W. Rowse. Few of these commissions were executed.

will do me the favor to sit for me, and be sure that I am always warmly and faithfully yours,  
J. R. LOWELL.

Stillman says that Mrs. Hughes likes my verses, so I enclose two pieces she has never seen.

*To Miss Norton*

CAMBRIDGE, *June 12, 1860.*

. . . I have seen Hawthorne twice, and he was gratified, he told me, with my little notice of "The Marble Faun," and thought it came nearer the kernel than any of them. And I was gratified, too. He told me that his characters always had their own way with him; that they were foredoomed from the first, and that he was only their historian. He is writing another story. He said also that it had been part of his plan in "The Scarlet Letter" to make Dimmesdale confess himself to a Catholic priest. I, for one, am sorry he did n't. It would have been psychologically admirable. He looks no older than when I saw him last, eight years ago, wears a mustache, and is easier in society than formerly.

But this is not what I meant to write about. I "took pen in hand" (and a horrible pen, too) meaning to tell you all about ex-President Franklin Pierce. Make a courtesy, if you please. Ticknor & Fields gave a dinner, and ex-P. F. P.

was there as a friend of Hawthorne. Anything funnier I never saw, or more out of place. (Stoker <sup>1</sup> has just come in with his foot bleeding, and oh, Jerusalem ! how my head aches !) He is used to public speaking, and so he public-speaks in a *tête-à-tête*, doing the appropriate gestures and all. He placed himself, after a while, by me, told me "how long, sir, he had looked forward, sir," etc. At last, leaning confidentially towards me, he said, "Sir, I glory in your fame ! I am proud of every man, sir, who does honor to me country !" I looked him straight in the face with the gravity of a Sphinx to whom a traveller should say, "Sir-Madam, I glory in the perfect unfrivolity of your sienite nature !" As an intimate female friend of mine says, it was *too* funny. I never saw the real Elijah Pogram before. But he seemed a good-natured kind of man, and told me a good story of Hawthorne. When Pierce had been nominated for the presidency, Hawthorne came to see him, sat down by him on a sofa, and after a melancholy silence, heaving a deep sigh, said, "Frank, *what* a pity !" Then after a pause, "But, after all, this world was not meant to be happy in — only to succeed in !"

I am at my wit's, paper's, and daylight's end, and am, as always,

Your

J. R. L.

<sup>1</sup> His dog.



*To C. E. Norton*

CAMBRIDGE, *July 12, 1860.*

My dear Charles,— The pen I write with emblemizes me. I am worn to a stump — I am muddy and cloggy with the work I have had to do — the feather part of me (curtailed at its best estate) has been torn, nibbled, and otherwise rendered as little suggestive of flight as possible — moreover, I am partly a goose. I have been writing a notice of “Wedgwood’s Dictionary”! You know my unfortunate weakness for doing things not quite superficially. So I have been a week about it — press waiting — devil at my elbow (I mean the printer’s) — every dictionary and vocabulary I own gradually gathering in a semicircle round my chair — and three of the days of twelve solid hours each. And with what result? At most six pages, which not six men will care anything about. And now it is done I feel as if I had taken hold of the book the wrong way, and that I should have devoted myself to his theory more and to particulars less; or, rather, that I ought to have had more space. But I had a gap to fill up — just so much and no more. There is one passage in it that I wager will make all of you laugh, and heavens! what fun I could have made of the book if I had been unscrupulous! But I soon learned to respect Wedgwood’s attainments, and resisted all temptation.

It is an awful thing to write against Time, my dear boy, and Time always is even with us in the end, for he never lets what is written against him last very long or go very far. . . .

. . . The older I grow the less I know — and I am only just beginning to be a student. Had I ever kept note-books, I might have known something — what people call knowing — in a multitudinous higgledy-piggledy kind of way. But method and arrangement are true knowledge ; the other is merely learning — good for little but show. I have only just got the key — not even that, but only an impression of it in wax ; and if I don't dig gold enough (for no other metal serves) to cast it before long, why, the mould loses its sharpness of edges and so . . . ! Ah, if I had twenty years sure ! . . .

*To W. D. Howells*

CAMBRIDGE, *Monday, August, 1860.*

My dear young Friend, — Here is a note to Mr. Hawthorne, which you can use if you have occasion.

Don't print too much and too soon ; don't get married in a hurry ; read what will make you *think*, not *dream* ; hold yourself dear, and more power to your elbow ! God bless you !

Cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

A man may have ever so much in him, but ever so much depends on how he gets it out.

*Finis, quoad Biglow.*

*To Nathaniel Hawthorne*

CAMBRIDGE, August 5, 1860.

My dear Hawthorne, — I have no masonic claim upon you except community of tobacco, and the young man who brings this does not smoke.

But he wants to look at you, which will do you no harm, and him a great deal of good.

His name is Howells, and he is a fine young fellow, and has written several *poems* in the "Atlantic," which of course you have never read, because you don't do such things yourself, and are old enough to know better.

When I think how much you might have profited by the perusal of certain verses of somebody who shall be nameless — but, no matter! If my judgment is good for anything, this youth has more in him than any of our younger fellows in the way of rhyme.

Of course he can't hope to rival the *Consule Planco* men. Therefore let him look at you, and charge it

To yours always,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To W. D. Howells*CAMBRIDGE, *December 1, 1860.*

My dear Sir, — I am glad the papers have had taste enough to find out the goodness of "The Pilot's Story."<sup>1</sup> Goethe tells us to ask the boys and the blackbirds which are the ripest cherries, but the public seems seldom to have much either of boy or blackbird in it, and newspaper editors still seldomer; but I shan't think the worse of your poem because they like it, for I liked it myself. More than that, I thought it a really fine poem. Accordingly, I am glad to hear that you are to send us another; glad also that you are making yourself scarce. That is not only wise, but worldly-wise, too. The Sibyl knew what she was about, and I, for one, don't believe that the suppressed verses would have added to the sly jade's reputation.

I could n't notice the "Poets and Poetry of the West" in the way you would have wished, so I thought it best not to wet my pen. To be perfectly honest, your own was wellnigh the only poetry I found in it, and the amount of rhyme-and-water was prodigious. It goes against my grain to cut up anything, unless there be some duty involved or some good to be done by it. I have given the book to the College Library,

<sup>1</sup> Printed in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

where it will sleep well with plenty of its peers. It gave me great pleasure to make your acquaintance, and to find you a man of sense as well as genius — a rare thing, especially in one so young. Keep fast hold of the one, for it is the clue that will bring you to the door that will open only to the magic password of the other. I shall not forget Mr. Piatt.

Your poem will be welcome when it arrives.

Very cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To Charles Nordhoff*

CAMBRIDGE, December 31, 1860.

My dear Sir, — I owe you a great many thanks for your letters, both for their personal kindness towards myself and for the trouble you have taken in sending the Yankeeisms — nearly all of which were new to me, and whose salt-sea flavor has its own peculiar *tang* in it. I have now to thank you also for your pamphlet, so timely and spirited, and which I read with great satisfaction on its own account, and more for the sake of the author.

I do not well know what to make of the present posture of affairs — whether to believe that we have not succeeded in replacing the old feeling of loyalty with the better one of Public Spirit, and whether this failure be due to our federal system — whose excellence as a drag on

centralization in the general government is balanced by its evil of disintegration, giving as it does to the citizens of each State separate interests and what the Italians call belfry patriotism; or whether it be due to the utter demoralization of the Democratic party, which has so long been content to barter principle for office; or whether to the want of political training and foresight, owing to our happy-go-lucky style of getting along hitherto. All this puzzles me, I confess. But one thing seems to me clear — that we have been running long enough by dead reckoning, and that it is time to take the height of the sun of righteousness.

Is it the effect of democracy to make all our public men cowards? An ounce of pluck just now were worth a king's ransom. There is one comfort, though a shabby one, in the feeling that matters will come to such a pass that courage will be forced upon us, and that when there is no hope left we shall learn a little self-confidence from despair. That in such a crisis the fate of the country should be in the hands of a sneak! If the Republicans stand firm we shall be saved, even at the cost of disunion. If they yield, it is all up with us and with the experiment of democracy.

As for new "Biglow Papers," God knows how I should like to write them, if they would

only *make* me as they did before. But I am so occupied and bothered that I have no time to *brood*, which with me is as needful a preliminary to hatching anything as with a clucking hen. However, I am going to try my hand, and see what will come of it. But what we want is an hour of Old Hickory, or Old Rough and Ready — some man who would take command and crystallize this chaos into order, as it is all ready to do round the slenderest thread of honest purpose and unselfish courage in any man who is in the right place. They advise us to be magnanimous, as if giving up what does not belong to us were magnanimity — to be generous, as if there were generosity in giving up a trust reposed in us by Providence. God bless Major Anderson for setting us a good example!

I hear one piece of good news. Our governor, in his speech to the General Court, is going to recommend that the State be instantly put on a war footing — so that, in case there should be need to order out the militia at the call of the general government, they may be ready to march at a moment's notice. If we can only get one or two Free States to show that they are in earnest, it will do a world of good.

If you should see a "Biglow Paper" before long, try to like it for auld lang syne's sake. I

must run over to hear my classes, so good-by  
and a Happy New Year from your

Cordial friend,

J. R. LOWELL.

P. S. 1862. I think the letter rather curious  
than otherwise now — we have got on so.

[The foregoing letter was not sent, as appears from the following note, until more than a year had passed after its writing.

ELMWOOD, *February 17, 1862.*

My dear Sir, — Hunting over my desk yesterday for some letters of Clough's, I found the enclosed to you. I cannot make out how it missed going to you then, but I would rather seem anything than ungrateful, and I send it now that my thanks for your kindness may be antedated (or *retrodated* rather) more than a year.

I expect to be in New York for a day or two — arriving Tuesday. I shall be at the "Albemarle."

Ever truly yours,

J. R. LOWELL.]

*To C. F. Briggs*

ELMWOOD, *March 11, 1861.*

My dear old Friend, — You see by my date that I am back again in the place I love best.



I am sitting in my old garret, at my old desk, smoking my old pipe, and loving my old friends. I begin already to feel more like my old self than I have these ten years. . . . I hope I shall find my old inspiration on tap here. It would not bear bottling and transportation. . . .

Our friendship came of age this year, did you know it? I am forty-two and *it* is twenty-one.

Affectionately yours as always,

J. R. L.

*To James T. Fields*

ELMWOOD, May 23, 1861.

My dear Fields, — I wish you all joy of your worm. You will find it no bad apprenticeship or prelude for that warmer and more congenial world to which all successful booksellers are believed by devout authors to go. I was going to say I was glad to be rid of my old man of the sea. But I don't believe I am. I doubt if we see the finger of Providence so readily in the stoppage of a salary as in its beginning or increment. A bore, moreover, that is periodical gets a friendly face at last and we miss it on the whole. Even the gout men don't like to have stop *too* suddenly, lest it may have struck to the stomach.

Well, good-by, delusive royalty! I abdicate with what grace I may. I lay aside my paper crown and feather sceptre. I have been at least

no Bourbon — if I have not learned much, I have forgotten a great deal.

Whatever I can do for the “Atlantic Monthly” I shall be glad to do. How much I can write I don’t know, and it is not of much consequence. My head is not so strong as it used to be, and I want to rest. But I would rather write on these terms — to be paid at the end of the year if matters prosper with you ; if not, to say no more about it. I think Ticknor & Fields deserve some gratitude from authors — at least I for one acknowledge my debt in that kind and would like to pay it. You have treated me well in every way, and I am not too proud to say I am grateful for it.

I wish to say in black and white that I am perfectly satisfied with the arrangements you have made. You will be surprised before long to find how easily you get on without me, and wonder that you ever thought me a necessity. It is amazing how quickly the waters close over one. He carries down with him the memory of his splash and struggle, and fancies it is still going on when the last bubble even has burst long ago. Good-by. Nature is equable. I have lost the “Atlantic,” but my cow has calved as if nothing had happened.

Cordially yours,  
J. R. L.

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, *August 7, 1861.*

. . . I have been reading with the greatest delight Dasent's "Njal's Saga," and if you haven't it, will bring it down with me. The introduction strikes me as rather higgledy-piggledy, but the translation is excellent — simple and strong. It has revived my old desire to write the story of Leif's Voyage to Vinland, and I should n't wonder if something came of it. Ideal border-ruffians those old Icelanders seem to have been — such hacking and hewing and killing, and such respect for all the forms of law! The book lets you into their life public and private. I could not leave the book till I had read every word of it. I am now reading "Great Expectations" and like it much. The characters, though, seem to me unreal somehow. Dickens appears to make his characters as the Chinese do those distorted wooden images. He picks out the crookedest and knottiest roots of temperament or accidental distortion and then cuts a figure to match. But this book is full of fine touches of nature, though I can't help dreading something melodramatic to come. . . .

*To Miss Norton*ELMWOOD, *August 12, 1861.*

. . . Two important events have taken place lately, which I shall mention in the order of their respective greatness. 1st. The Agricultural Festival; 2d. The election of Mayor. And now of the Cerealia. (Don't confound this with Serialia and suppose I have taken up the "Atlantic" again.) You must know then that Cambridge boasts of two distinguished farmers — Mr. John Holmes, of Holmes Place, and him who would be, in a properly constituted order of things, the Marquess of Thompson Lot with a *p*. The marquess, fearing that (since Squire Holmes cultivated his own estate with his own hands and a camp-stool) his rival might be in want of food and too proud to confess it, generously resolved to give him a dinner, which, to save his feelings, he adroitly veiled with the pretence of an Agricultural Festival and Show of Vegetables. Dr. Howe and Mr. Storey were the other guests, "when" (as the "Annual Register" would say) the following vegetables were served up with every refinement of the culinary art. 1° Egg-plants; 2° Squash; 3° Beets; 4° Carrots; 5° Potatoes; 6° Tomatoes; 7° Turnips; 8° Beans; 9° Corn; 10° Cucumbers; (and not exhibited, partly out of modesty and partly for want of suitable dishes, but

alluded to modestly from time to time), 11° Cabbages, 12° Salsify. Of fruits there was a variety, also from the estate, consisting chiefly of 1° Raspberries and 2° Blackberries. Cider, also from the estate, was kept back out of tenderness to the guests, and because there was home-made vinegar in the casters. "After the cloth was removed" the chairman rose, and with suitable solemnity gave the first regular toast — "Speed the Plough." This was acknowledged by Mr. Holmes in a neat speech. He said that "he felt himself completely *squashed* by the abundance before him. That, as there was nothing wanting, so nothing could be marked with a *caret* ^ . That Micawber himself would have been pleased with the *turnups*, than which who nose anything more charmingly *retroussé*? That he could say with the great Julius, *Veni, vidi, vici*, I came and saw a *beet*. That he could but stammer his astonishment at a board so cu-cumbered with delicacies. That he envied the potatoes their eyes to look on such treasures. That the Tom-martyrs were worthy the best ages of the Church, and fit successors of St. Thomas. That with such *corn* who would not be a toemartyr? That he hoped no one would criticise his remarks in a punkintilious spirit." This, as you will imagine, is quite an inadequate report of the remarks he might have made. The dinner went off with

great good-humor and we had cards in the evening. . . .

Your affectionate

THOMPSON LOT.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, the day before you wrote  
your last letter; viz., *September 28, 1861.*

My dear Sibyl, — Will you kindly tell me what *has happened* next week, so that I may be saved from this daily debauch of newspapers? How many “heroic Mulligans” who *meurent et ne se rendent pas* to the reporters, with the privilege of living and surrendering to the enemy? How many “terrific conflicts” near Cheat Mountain (ominous name), with one wounded on our side, and enemy’s loss supposed to be heavy? How many times we are to save Kentucky and lose our self-respect? How many times the Potomac is to be “hermetically sealed”? How often Mr. Seward is to put newspaper correspondents on the level of Secretaries of State? etc., etc. I ask all these questions because your so-welcome letter, which I received on Wednesday the 25th, was dated to-morrow the 29th. There is something very impressive to the imagination in a letter from the future, and to be even a day in advance of the age is a good deal — how much more five or six! How does it seem to come back? Is

not everything weary and stale? Or do you live all the time in a balloon, thus seeing over the lines of Time, the old enemy of us all? Pray tell me how much foolisher I shall be this day twelve-month. Well, at any rate, you can't see far enough to find the day when your friendship shall not be one of my dearest possessions. . . .

Has it begun to be cold with you? I had a little Italian bluster of brushwood fire yesterday morning, but the times are too hard with me to allow of such an extravagance except on the brink of gelation. The horror of my tax-bill has so infected my imagination that I see myself and all my friends begging entrance to the P. H. (From delicacy I use initials.) I fancy all of you gathering fuel on the Newport beaches. I hope you will have lots of wrecks — Southern privateers, of course. Don't ever overload yourself. I can't bear to think of you looking like the poor women I met in the Pineta at Ravenna just at dusk, having the air of moving druidical altars or sudden toadstools.

Our trees are beginning to turn — the maples are all ablaze, and even in our *ashes* live their wonted fires. The Virginia creeper that I planted against the old horse-chestnut stump trickles down in blood as if its support were one of Dante's living wood. The haze has be-

gun, and the lovely mornings when one blesses the sun. I confess our summer weather too often puts one in mind of Smithfield and the Book of Martyrs.

I have had an adventure. I have dined with a prince. After changing my mind twenty times, I at last sat down desperately and "had the honor to accept." And I was glad of it — for H. I. H.'s resemblance to his uncle is something wonderful. I had always supposed the portraits of the elder Nap imperialized, but Jerome N. looks as if he had sat for that picture where the emperor lies reading on a sofa — you remember it. A trifle weaker about the mouth, suggesting loss of teeth; but it is not so, for his teeth are exquisite. He looks as you would fancy his uncle if he were *Empereur de Ste. Hélène, roi d'Yvetot*. I sat next to Colonel Ragon, who led the forlorn hope at the taking of the Malakoff and was at the siege of Rome. He was a very pleasant fellow. (I don't feel quite sure of my English yet — *J'ai tant parlé Français que je trouve beaucoup de difficulté à m'y déshabituer.*) Pendant — I mean during — the dinner Ooendel Homes récitait des vers vraiment jolis. Il arrivait déjà au bout, quand M. Ragon, se tournant vers moi d'un air mêlé d'intelligence et d'interrogation, et à la même fois d'un Colomb qui fait la découverte d'un monde tout nouveau, s'écria,



“C'est en vers, Monsieur, n'est ce pas?”  
St'anegdot charmang j'ai rahcontay ah Ooen-  
dell daypwee, avec days eclah de reer. (See  
Bolmar.) Mr. Everett made a speech où il y  
avait un soupçon de longueur. The prince re-  
plied most gracefully, as one

“ Who saying nothing yet saith all.”

He speaks French exquisitely — foi de professeur. Ho parlato anche Italiano col Colonnello, chi è stato sei anni in Italia, and I believe I should have tried Hebrew with the secretary of legation, who looked like a Jew, if I had had the chance. After dinner the prince was brought up and *presented to me!* Please remember that when we meet. The political part of our conversation of course I am not at liberty to repeat (!!), but he asked me whether I myself occupied of any work literary at present? to which I answered, no. Then he spoke of the factories at Lowell and Lawrence, and said how much the intelligence of the operatives had interested him, etc., etc. He said that Boston seemed to have much more movement intellectual than the rest of the country (to which I replied, *nous le croyons, au moins*); astonished himself at the freedom of opinion here, etc., at the absence of Puritanism and the like. I thought him very intelligent and thanked him for his bo deescoor o saynah Frongsay

shure lays ahfair deetahlee. (See Bolmar again,  
which I took in my pocket.) . . .

Ever yours, J. R. L.

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, October 12, 1861.

. . . You urged me to read poetry — to feed myself on bee bread — so that I might get into the mood of writing some. Well, I have n't been reading any, but I *have* written something<sup>1</sup> — whether poetry or no I cannot tell yet. But I want you to like it if you can. Leigh Hunt speaks somewhere of our writing things for particular people, and wondering as we write if such or such a one will like it. Just so I thought of you, *after* I had written — for while I was writing I was wholly absorbed. I had just two days allowed me by Fields for the November "Atlantic," and I got it done. It had been in my head some time, and when you see it you will remember my having spoken to you about it. Indeed, I owe it to you, for the hint came from one of those books of Souvestre's you lent me — the Breton legends. The writing took hold of me enough to leave me tired out and to satisfy me entirely as to what was the original of my head and back pains. But whether it is good or not, I am not yet far enough off to say. But *do* like it, if you can. Fields says it is "splendid," with tears in

<sup>1</sup> "The Washers of the Shroud."

his eyes — but then I read it to him, which is half the battle. I began it as a lyric, but it *would* be too aphoristic for that, and finally flatly refused to sing at any price. So I submitted, took to pentameters, and only hope the thoughts are good enough to be preserved in the ice of the colder and almost glacier-slow measure. I think I have done well — in some stanzas at least — and not wasted words. It is about present matters — but abstract enough to be above the newspapers. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, December 9, 1861.

. . . I have been writing a Biglow Paper, and I feel as nervous about it as a young author not yet weaned of public favor. It was clean against my critical judgment, for I don't believe in resuscitations — we hear no good of the *posthumous* Lazarus — but I *may* get into the vein and do some good. . . . I hope Shady Hill won't think it dull — and I have a way of flattering myself that the next will be better. Let us hope for the best. . . .

*To James T. Fields*

ELMWOOD, January 1, 1862.

My dear Fields, — I sent number two to Mr. Nichols this morning. If I am not mistaken it will *take*. 'T is about Mason and Slidell, and I

have ended it with a little ballad with a refrain that I hope has a kind of *tang* to it.

Do you want any more literary notices? I have some Calderon translations I should like to say a few words about.

I wish you and Ticknor a Happy New Year, and remain

Truly yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, March 21, 1862.

My dear Fields,—Finding a man's "genius" is something, it seems to me, that he should do for himself, and which nobody else, not even Mr. Higginson, can do for him. However, I send you Mr. Brown's "Genius" (or his essay in that direction), neatly done up and freight one eighth of a dollar. As you are a man of business the said  $\frac{1}{8}$  will probably be twelve cents; with me it invariably turns out to be thirteen, which keeps me always poor. I have made, indeed, one or two helpless struggles, but it has been no go, and a dollar is one hundred and four cents accordingly — when I pay it —  $8 \times 13$  — q. e. d.

As for the Biglow — glad you like it. If not so good as the others, the public will be sure to. I think well of the "Fable," and believe there is nothing exotic therein. I am going to kill

Wilbur before long, and give a "would-have-been" obituary on him in the American style. That is, for example, "he wrote no epic, but if he had, he would have been," etc. I don't know how many of these future-conditional geniuses we have produced — many score, certainly.

You asked the other day for an article on "birds' nests." I don't find it, and think it must have been made into soup for a blue-buttoned Mandarin that dropped in to dinner. What could I do? Rats were not to be had on such short notice. That is my theory. Practically, it may turn up some day, like Mr. Brown's "Genius" — when I had given up all hopes of ever seeing it.

Good-by — yours — with a series of Biglows rising, like the visionary kings before Macbeth, to destroy all present satisfaction,

J. R. L.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, June 5, 1862.

My dear Fields, — It's no use. I reverse the gospel difficulty, and while the flesh is willing enough, the spirit is weak. My brain must lie fallow a spell — there is no superphosphate for those worn-out fields. Better no crop than small potatoes. I want to have the *passion* of the thing on me again and beget lusty Biglows. I am all the more dejected because you have

treated me so well. But I must rest awhile. My brain is out of kilter.

They say the news is good last evening, but it does not put me in spirits. I fear we shall go to trying our old fire-and-gunpowder-cement over again, and then what waste of blood and treasure and hope !

So forgive me this time, and believe me

Faithfully yours, J. R. L.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, *Saturday, August 2, 1862.*

My dear Fields, — I have an idea — nay, I honestly believe even two ideas (which is perhaps more than in fairness falls to a single person) ; but I can't persuade the words to marry either of them — such matches are made in heaven. Did you ever (when you were a boy) play " Bat, bat, come into my hat " ? I have since I was I won't say how old, and under the most benign conditions — fine evening, smooth lawn, lovely woman to inspire, and, more than all, a new hat. The bat that can resist all these inducements must be little better than a brick-bat, and yet who ever knew one of those wayward, noctivagant creatures to condescend even to such terms ? They will stoop towards the soaring Castor, they will look into that mysterious hollow which some angry divinity has doomed us to wear, which is the Yankee's port-

manteau and travelling-safe ; but they will not venture where we venture the most precious (or most worthless) part of our person twenty times a day. Yet an owl will trap you one in a minute and make no bones of it. Well, I have been pestering my two ideas (one for a fable by Mr. Wilbur, the other a dialogue with a recruiting-drum by Mr. Biglow — with *such* a burthen to it !) just in that way, but I might as well talk to Egg Rock. *If* I were an owl (don't you see ?) I should have no trouble. I should n't consult the wishes of my bat, but just gobble him up and done with it.

Truth is, my dear Fields, I am amazed to think how I ever kept my word about the six already caught. I look back and wonder how in great H. I ever did it. But Sunday is always a prosperous day with me ; so pray wait till Monday, and then I shall either have done my job or shall know it can't be done.

But what shall one say ? Who feels like asking more recruits to go down into McClellan's beautiful trap, from which seventy thousand men can't get away ? Has n't he pinned his army there like a bug in a cabinet ? — only you don't have to *feed* your bug ! I feel “ blue as the blue forget-me-not,” and don't see how we are to be saved but by a miracle, and miracles are n't wrought for folks without heads, at least since the time of St. Denys.

I am much obliged to you for introducing me to Dr. Brown's book, which I like very much. There is a *soul* in it somehow that one does not find in many books, and he seems to me a remarkably good critic, where his Scoticism does n't come in his way.

Give me a victory and I will give you a poem; but I am now clear down in the bottom of the well, where I see the Truth too near to make verses of.

Truly yours,

J. R. L.

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, *Xmas Night*, 1862.

. . . I send the poor verses.<sup>1</sup> You will see that I accepted your criticism and left out the crowding stanza. I have also made some corrections — chiefly because I altered the last stanza but one in order to get in "feed every skill," and then found the same rhymes staring at me from the last. So, as I could not copy it again and did not like to send anything with corrections in it, I e'en weakened the last stanza a little to make all square. You see what it is to write in rhyme, and not to remember what you have written. It is safer to repeat one's self in prose.

<sup>1</sup> To be read at a lecture on himself, which was to be given in California, by the Rev. T. Starr King.



I hope all of you have had a good Christmas. I don't see why any national misfortunes should prevent our being glad over the birth of Good into the world eighteen centuries and a half ago. To me it is always a delightful day, and I, dull as I may be, come to dinner with a feeling that at least I am helping in the traditional ceremonies. One can say at least with a good conscience, as he lays his head on his pillow, like one of My Lord Tennyson's jury-men, *Caput apri detuli* — *I brought the bore's head*. With which excellent moral, and love to all,

I am always your loving

J. R. L.

Asked in the very friendliest way  
 To send some word prolific,  
 Some pearl of wit, from Boston Bay  
 To astonish the Pacific,  
 I fished one day and dredged the next,  
 And, when I had not found it,  
 "Our bay is deep," I murmured, vexed,  
 "But has vast flats around it!"

You fancy us a land of schools,  
 Academies, and colleges,  
 That love to cram our emptiest fools  
 With 'onomies and 'ologies,  
 Till, fired, they rise and leave a line  
 Of light behind like rockets —  
 Nay, if you ask them out to dine,  
 Bring lectures in their pockets.

But, 'stead of lecturing other folks,  
To be *yourself* the topic ;  
To bear the slashes, jerks, and pokes  
Of scalpels philanthropic —  
It makes one feel as if he 'd sold,  
In some supreme emergence,  
His *corpus vile*, and were told,  
“ You 're wanted by the surgeons ! ”

I felt, when begged to send a verse  
By way of friendly greeting,  
As if you 'd stopped me in my hearse  
With “ Pray, address the meeting ! ”  
For, when one 's made a lecture's theme,  
One feels, in sad sincerity,  
As he were dead, or in a dream  
Confounded with posterity.

I sometimes, on the long-sloped swells  
Of deeper songs careening,  
Shaking sometimes my cap and bells,  
But still with earnest meaning,  
Grow grave to think my leaden lines  
Should make so long a journey,  
And there among your golden mines  
Be uttered by attorney.

What says the East, then, to the West,  
The old home to the new one,  
The mother-bird upon the nest  
To the far-flown, but true one ?  
Fair realm beneath the evening-star,  
Our western gate to glory,  
You send us faith and cheer from far ;  
I send you back a story.

We are your Past, and, short or long,  
What leave Old Days behind them  
Save bits of wisdom and of song  
For very few to find them ?  
So, children, if my tale be old,  
My moral not the newest,  
Listen to Grannam while they 're told,  
For both are of the truest.

---

Far in a farther East than this,  
When Nature still held league with Man,  
And shoots of New Creation's bliss  
Through secret threads of kindred ran;  
When man was more than shops and stocks,  
And earth than dirt to fence and sell,  
Then all the forests, fields, and rocks  
Their upward yearning longed to tell.

The forests muse of keel and oar;  
The field awaits the ploughshare's seam;  
The rock in palace-walls would soar;  
To rise by service all things dream.  
And so, when Brahma walked the earth,  
The golden vein beneath the sward  
Cried, "Take me, Master; all my worth  
Lies but in serving thee, my lord!

"Without thee gold is only gold,  
A sullen slave that waits on man,  
Sworn liegeman of the Serpent old  
To thwart the Maker's nobler plan;  
But, ductile to thy plastic will,  
I yield as flexible as air,  
Speak every tongue, feed every skill,  
Take every shape of good and fair.

“The soul of soul is loyal hope,  
The wine of wine is friendship’s juice,  
The strength of strength is gracious scope,  
The gold of gold is noble use;  
Through thee alone I am not dross;  
Through thee, O master-brain and heart!  
I climb to beauty and to art,  
I bind the wound and bear the Cross.”

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, December 31, 1862.

. . . I wish you all a Happy New Year!  
The first of January always comes to me, I  
confess, with a kind of sadness.

“Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back  
Wherein he puts — alms for Oblivion.”

This one comes in storm. But let us have a  
cheerful confidence that we are worth damn-  
ing, for that implies a chance also of something  
better. . . .

Affectionately always,  
J. R. L.

*To Mrs. Francis G. Shaw*

ELMWOOD, April 6, 1863.

. . . I believe it one of the most happy things  
in the world, as we grow older, to have as many  
ties as possible with whatever is best in our own  
past, and to be pledged as deeply as may be to  
our own youth. . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, August 28, 1863.

My dear Sarah,—Not a day has passed since I heard the dreadful news<sup>1</sup> that I have not thought tenderly of you and yours ; but I could not make up my mind to write you, and the longer I put it off the harder it grew. I have tried several times, and broken down. I knew you would be receiving all manner of consolation, and, as I know that consolation is worse than nothing, I would not add mine. There is nothing for such a blow as that but to bow the head and bear it. We may think of many things that in some measure make up for such a loss, but we can think of nothing that will give us back what we have lost. The best is that, so far as he was concerned, all was noble and of the highest example.

I have been writing something about Robert, and if, after keeping a little while, it should turn out to be a poem, I shall print it ; but not unless I think it some way worthy of what I feel, however far the best verse falls short of noble living and dying such as his.

I would rather have my name known and blest, as his will be, through all the hovels of

<sup>1</sup> Of the death of her only son, the gallant Colonel Shaw, one of the most heroic of the youths who offered their lives in the Civil War to their country and to freedom.

an outcast race, than blaring from all the trumpets of repute. . . .

If the consolation of the best is wearisome, it is yet something to have the sympathy of every one, as I know you and Frank have. God bless and sustain you!

Your always loving

J. R. LOWELL.

*To James T. Fields*

ELMWOOD, Monday, August 31, 1863.

My dear Fields, — I really do not know what to say. You give me altogether too much and lay me under an obligation which I shall have confidence enough in your friendliness to rest under for the present, because the money will be of use to me. But I shall consider myself as owing you more verses than you debit me with. What annoys me is that I fear you took the badinage in my last note to you for a hint, which it was very far from being, I assure you. However, you have driven the sharpest kind of spur into my flank, and I shall not rest till I have written something as good as I can for the "Atlantic."

I have a few things that may help you in your edition of "Shakespeare's Sonnets." In the first place, print from the edition of Little & Brown, by Child. It is by much the best text in my judgment. There are still some

obscurities which set me daft, and which you will have to leave, I fear, as you find them. Here follow a few of my marginal pencillings, which you may take for what they are worth.

First, read carefully Sonnet v., and then consider these lines in the sixth :

“ Make sweet some phial ; *treasure* thou some place  
With Beauty’s *treasure* ere it be self-killed.”

This should read, I have scarce a doubt,

“ Make sweet some phial ; *pleasure* thou some place  
With Beauty’s treasure, ere *itself* (i. e. Beauty) be killed.”

I think the first *treasure* a mere misprint, and *pleasure* carries out the conceit in the first half of the verse, “ *make sweet* some phial.”

Sonnet xxiii. :

“ So I, *for fear of trust* — ”

I don’t understand this. Same sonnet, “ O let my *books* ” — should be *looks* ? and farther on, “ that more hath more ” is, I think, sophisticated.

Sonnet xxxiii. : after “ heavenly alchemy ” should be a comma, not a semicolon.

“ Stealing unseen to west with *this* disgrace.”

I suspect Shakespeare wrote *his*.

Sonnet xxxv. :

“ Excusing thy sins, more than thy sins are,”

is cimmerian to me. I am inclined to think there should be a semicolon after "amiss," and then

"Excusing thy sin 's more than thy sins are."

That is, all men make faults. *I* do, in finding comparisons to make "thy sin seem venial," and, "in excusing thee, sin worse than thou."

Sonnet xlvii. :

"For thou *not* farther than my thoughts," etc.,

should be *no*. The original edition has *nor* for *noe* — as I think. *No* is more simple and idiomatic.

Sonnet li. :

"Shall neigh (no dull flesh) in his fiery race."

'Tis scarce probable that Shakespeare, who in "Cymbeline" wrote with such disgust of the boar that cries "Oh!" and mounts, should have thought a neigh much less animal than a grunt. In the original there are no brackets, and I fancy the *neigh* is a blunder for some active verb governing "dull flesh" — but *what* one, I despair of.

Sonnet lxiii. :

"And they shall live, and he in them still green"

should be

"And they shall live, and he in them, still green."

The *evergreen* plainly qualifies both the *they* and *he*.



Sonnet lxxv. :

“ Shall Time’s best jewel from Time’s chest lie hid ? ”

What does that mean ? *To lie hidden from a chest* is hardly worthy of Shakespeare’s exquisite precision of phrase. I think he wrote “ from Time’s *quest*,” and then the “ lie hid ” is set right.

Sonnet lxxvii. :

“ And steal dead *seeing* of his living hue,”

should be (meo periculo) “ dead *seeming*.” Read the context. Same sonnet,

“ And proud of many,” etc.

I don’t understand it, and suspect it grievously to be stark nonsense as it stands.

Sonnet lxxxiv. :

“ Who is it that says most that can say more  
Than this rich praise, — that you alone are you ?  
In whose confine immured is the store  
Which should example where your equal grew.”

should read, I think, as I have corrected in margin. After “ dignifies his story ” should be a colon for a comma.

Sonnet lxxxviii. : after “ attained ” should be a comma, not a semicolon.

Sonnet xcvi. :

“ They were but sweet, but figures of delight.”

This is nonsense. *Only* sweet ? What more can a man ask in this life ? Shakespeare wrote,

“ They were, *best sweet*, but,” etc.

## Sonnet cxv. :

“ When I was certain o’er uncertainty,  
Crowning the present, doubting of the rest.”

There is something wrong here. One would not like such a loose linch-pin in his triumphal car. He could not be “certain o’er uncertainty” so long as he was “*doubting* of the rest.” It is *just possible* that it may have stood

“ Might I not then say, *Now I love you best*  
When I was certain? Our uncertainty  
Crowning the present, doubting of the rest.”

Or else,

“ o’er uncertainty  
Crowning the present.”

Sonnet cxx. : “*My* deepest sense” should, I guess, read *By*, for it applies to both of them.

Some of my suggestions may be of use to you. Some are mere doubts to set your wits at work. You may depend upon it, the text even now is very far from Shakespeare’s meaning. There are many passages besides the ones I have mentioned which are quite beyond my comprehension. That, of course, is none of your business as an editor, but it has always seemed to me droll how long the world would read nonsense on trust without the least suspicion. My emendations on the sixth, sixty-fifth, and sixty-seventh I think will stand reflection. But if any difficulties occur to you in printing, I wish

you would tell me what they are, for I like to worry these rats that eat out the sense, even if I cannot exterminate them. Shall you print the "Lover's Complaint"? *That*, I think, is almost hopeless in some places.

Renewing my thanks, I remain

Always cordially yours, J. R. L.

*To Thomas Hughes*

HARVARD COLLEGE, *September 9, 1863.*

My dear Hughes, — Will you do anything that lies in your way for my young friend Mr. Lincoln, and very much oblige me thereby? He wishes particularly to see you, and would like a few hints about employing his very short time in London well. He has been one of our tutors here.

To almost any other Englishman I should think it needful to explain that he is not President Lincoln, you are all so "shady" in our matters. The "Times," I see, has now sent over an "Italian" to report upon us — a clever man, but a double foreigner, as an Italian with an English wash over him. Pray, don't believe a word he says about our longing to go to war with England. We are all as cross as terriers with your kind of neutrality, but the last thing we want is another war. If the rebel iron-clads are allowed to come out, there might be a change.

If you can give Mr. Lincoln any hints or helps for seeing Oxford you would be doing him a great kindness, and adding another to the many you have done me.

Cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To James T. Fields*

ELMWOOD, November 30, 1863.

My dear Fields, — You know I *owe* you a poem — *two* in my reckoning, and here is one of them.<sup>1</sup> If this is not to your mind, I can hammer you out another. I have a feeling that some of it is *good* — but is it too long? I want to fling my leaf on dear Shaw's grave. Perhaps I was wrong in stiffening the feet of my verses a little, in order to give them a kind of slow funeral tread. But I conceived it so, and so it would be. I wanted the poem a little *monumental*, perhaps I have made it *obituary*. But tell me just how it strikes you, and don't be afraid of my nerves. They can stand much in the way of friendly frankness, and besides, I find I am acquiring a vice of modesty as I grow older. I used to try the trumpet now and then; I am satisfied now with a pipe (provided the tobacco is good).

I have been reading the "Wayside Inn" with the heartiest admiration. The introduction

<sup>1</sup> "Memoriæ Positum. R. G. Shaw."

is masterly — so simple, clear, and strong. Let 'em put in all their *ifs* and *buts*; I don't wonder the public are hungrier and thirstier for his verse than for that of all the rest of us put together. Curtis's article was excellent. I read also Hale's story with singular pleasure, increased when I learned whose it was. Get more of him. He has that lightness of touch and ease of narration that are worth everything. I think it the cleverest story in the "Atlantic" since "My Double" (also his), which appeared in *my* time. I confess I am rather weary of the high-pressure style.

Yours always,

J. R. L.

*To Thomas Hill*<sup>1</sup>

ELMWOOD, December 8, 1863.

My dear Dr. Hill, — I have been meaning to speak to you for some time about something which I believe you are interested in as well as myself, and not having spoken, I make occasion to write this note. Something ought to be done about the trees in the college yard. That is my thesis, and my corollary is that you are the man to do it. They remind me always of a young author's first volume of poems. There are too many of 'em and too many of one kind.

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Dr. Hill, president of Harvard University. This letter was printed in the *Cincinnati Times-Star*, October 28, 1893.

If they were not planted in such formal rows, they would typify very well John Bull's notion of "our democracy," where every tree is its neighbor's enemy, and all turn out scrubs in the end, because none can develop fairly. Then there is scarce anything but American elms. I have nothing to say against the tree in itself. I have some myself whose trunks I look on as the most precious baggage I am responsible for in the journey of life, but planted as they are in the yard, there's no chance for one in ten. If our buildings so nobly dispute architectural preëminence with cotton mills, perhaps it is all right that the trees should become spindles, but I think Hesiod (who knew something of country matters) was clearly right in his half being better than the whole, and nowhere more so than in the matter of trees. There are two English beeches in the yard which would become noble trees if the elms would let 'em alone. As it is, they are in danger of starving. Now, as you are our Kubernetes, I want you to take the 'elm in hand. We want more variety, more grouping. We want to learn that one fine tree is worth more than any mob of second rate ones. We want to take a leaf out of Chaucer's book and understand that in a stately grove every tree must "stand well from his fellow apart." A doom hangs over us in the matter of architecture, but if we will only let a tree alone it will

build itself with a nobleness of proportion and grace of detail that Giotto himself might have envied. Nor should the pruning as now be trusted to men who get all they cut off, and whose whole notion of pruning accordingly is, "axe and it shall be given unto you." Do, pray, take this matter into your own hands — for you know how to love a tree — and give us a modern instance of a wise saw. Be remembered among your other good things as the president that planted the groups of evergreens for the wind to dream of the sea in all summer and for the snowflakes to roost on in winter and believe me (at the end of my sheet though not of my sermon) always cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To J. L. Motley*<sup>1</sup>

CAMBRIDGE, *July* 28, 1864.

My dear Motley, — I write you on a matter of business. You may have heard that Norton and I have undertaken to edit the "North American" — a rather Sisyphean job, you will say. It wanted three chief elements to be successful. It was n't thoroughly, that is, thick-and-thinly, loyal, it was n't lively, and it had no particular opinions on any particular subject.

It was an eminently safe periodical, and accord-

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from the *Correspondence of John Lothrop Motley*, ii. 167.

ingly was in great danger of running aground. It was an easy matter, of course, to make it loyal — even to give it opinions (such as they were), but to make it alive is more difficult. Perhaps the day of the quarterlies is gone by, and those megatheria of letters may be in the mere course of nature withdrawing to their last swamps to die in peace. Anyhow, here we are with our megatherium on our hands, and we must strive to find what will fill his huge belly, and keep him alive a little longer. You see what's coming. Pray imagine all the fine speeches and God-bless-your-honors, and let me proceed at once to hold out the inevitable hat. Could n't you write us an article now and then? It would be a great help to us, and you shall have *carte blanche* as to subject. Could n't you write on the natural history of that diplomatic cuttlefish of Schleswig-Holstein without forfeiting your ministerial equanimity? The creature has be-muddled himself with such a cloud of ink that he is almost indiscernible to the laic eye. Or on recent German literature? Or on Austria and its resources? Or, in short, on anything that may be solemn in topic and entertaining in treatment? Our pay is n't much, but you shall have five dollars a page, and the object is in a sense patriotic. If the thought be dreadful, see if you can't find also something pleasing in it, as Young managed to do in "Eternity." Imagine the differ-



ence in the tone of the "Review." If you are a contributor, of course it will always be "Our amiable and accomplished minister at the Court of Vienna, who unites in himself," etc., etc., etc.; or else, "In such a state of affairs it was the misfortune of this country to be represented at Vienna by a minister as learned in Low Dutch as he was ignorant of high statesmanship," etc., etc. I pull my beaver over my eyes and mutter "*Bewa-r-re!*" etc. But, seriously, you can help us a great deal, and I really do not care what you write about if you will only write.

As to our situation here, you are doubtless well informed. My own feeling has always been confident, and it is now hopeful. If Mr. Lincoln is re-chosen, I think the war will soon be over. If not, there will be attempts at negotiation, during which the rebels will recover breath, and then war again with more chances in their favor. Just now everything looks well. The real campaign is clearly in Georgia, and Grant has skilfully turned all eyes to Virginia by taking the command there in person. Sherman is a very able man, in dead earnest, and with a more powerful army than that of Virginia. It is true that the mercantile classes are longing for peace, but I believe the people are more firm than ever. So far as I can see, the opposition to Mr. Lincoln is both selfish and factious, but it is much in favor of the right side that the Democratic

party have literally not so much as a single plank of principle to float on, and the sea runs high. They don't know what they are in favor of—hardly what they think it safe to be against. And I doubt if they will gain much by going into an election on negatives. I attach some importance to the peace negotiation at Niagara (ludicrous as it was) as an indication of despair on the part of the rebels, especially as it was almost coincident with Clanricarde's movement in the House of Lords. Don't be alarmed about Washington. The noise made about it by the Copperheads is enough to show there is nothing dangerous in any rebel movements in that direction. I have no doubt that Washington is as safe as Vienna. What the Fremont defection may accomplish I can't say, but I have little fear from it. Its strength lies solely among our German Radicals, the most impracticable of mankind. If our population had been as homogeneous as during the Revolutionary war, our troubles would have been over in a year. All our foreign trading population have no fatherland but the till, and have done their best to destroy our credit. All our snobs, too, are Secesh.

But I always think of Virgil's

“Pur a noi converrà vincer la punga  
. . . se non — tal ne s' offerse.”

We have the promise of God's word and God's nature on our side. Moreover, I have

never believed, do not now believe, in the possibility of separation. The instinct of the people on both sides is against it. Is not the *coup de grâce* of the Alabama refreshing? That an American sloop of war should sink a British ship of equal force, manned by British sailors and armed with British guns in the British Channel! There is something to make John Bull reflect.

Now do write something for us, if you can, and with kindest remembrances to Mrs. Motley,

Believe me always,

Cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To W. D. Howells*

ELMWOOD, July 28, 1864.

My dear Sir, — Your article<sup>1</sup> is in print, and I was very glad to get it. Pray instruct me to whom I shall pay over your *honorarium*.

We don't pay very well, but 't is better than nothing. Write us another on "Modern Italian Literature," or anything you like. I don't forget my good opinion of you and my interest in your genius. Therefore I may be frank.

You have enough in you to do honor to our literature. Keep on cultivating yourself. You know what I thought. You must sweat the

<sup>1</sup> For the *North American Review*, on "Recent Italian Comedy."



*William Dean Howells*



it very charming, and him clearly the founder of modern prose. A singular sweetness, ease, and grace. Nothing came near it for centuries. And then the just visible unobtrusive play of humor — a kind of heat-lightning round the horizon of his mind without a harmful bolt in the whole of it. And then there is no great mischief in his dirt. When Casti versifies his stories you feel this — for Casti makes them bad. . . . I am now taking a good draught of old favorites, Hakluyt and Purchas. . . .

Your always loving

J. R. L.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, Thursday, August 18, 1864.

My dear Charles, — The other day Field<sup>1</sup> came to see us, and told me that he was going to Ashfield next Saturday, whereupon I thought we could not do better than come together. He will at least mitigate my dulness, which for several weeks has neighbored on idiocy, having had a headache *all* the time — which makes it lucky 't was vacation.

I believe Fanny wrote to Jane how (like a

<sup>1</sup> The late John W. Field, a man of singular friendliness, of whom Lowell, shortly after making his acquaintance, wrote : —

Few things to charm me more can nature yield  
Than a broad, open, breezy, high-viewed Field.

fool) I went down East with a notion of exploring the Coast of Maine in the company of a Congressional Committee. I saw the chairman — who seemed amazed to see *me* — and a roomful of his satellites (of the clean-dicky and dirty-shirt kind); found that we were to be trotted round on show like a menagerie; and came straight home again, wiser, hotter, and headachier. I find that one's ears grow with his growth.

Except this insane escapade, I have not stirred from my study since vacation began — unless I count one dinner at the Club. To-day I am going to help dine Mr. Chase. I shall come home sorry that I went, I know; but hope always gets the better of experience with me. I almost think I should be willing to live over again — though I ought to know better by this time.

O Frances Dobbs!  
This life is cobs  
Without one grain of corn :  
'T is wake and eat —  
Sleep — then repeat,  
Since ever I was born !

And yet we fear  
Our tread-mill here  
May cease its weary round,  
And think 't is not  
All one to rot  
Above or under ground!

This dining, by the way, is a funny thing. Did it ever occur to mortal man to give a dinner to some one who really wanted it? I think it would be rather a good lark to dine the *hungriest* man in Boston. Would n't I like to dine old Farragut (*feragut*) though! By Jove! the sea-service has n't lost its romance, in spite of iron turtles. And is n't wood, after all, the thing? I believe the big guns will bring us back to wooden ships again. For one lucky shot may sink one of these hogs in armor. By the way, Sir Richard Hawkins discusses this very matter of big shot two hundred and fifty years ago, and decides in favor of large bores, because the ball will make a leak that can't be stopped. . . .

I believe I was glad to see that Arthur was a prisoner. He is safe, at any rate for the present, which is a comfort. He did all a man could in going. He offered his life, and if Fate will not take it we ought to be thankful. . . . As John [Holmes] says (he has dined with us *twice* this week!), "It's better to suffer from too little bread than from too much lead." . . .

*To James T. Fields*

ELMWOOD, October 18, 1864.

. . . It's a great compliment you pay me that, whenever I have fairly begun to edit a



journal, you should buy it.<sup>1</sup> I heard some time ago that the thing was talked of, but hear it is concluded just as I was about writing you.

Firstly : Whar is Biglow? Let Echo repeat her customary observation, adding only that I began one, but it would not go. I had idees in plenty, but, all I could do, they would not marry themselves to immortal worse. Not only did I wish to write, for there was a chance of a thousand, but I wanted money — so there can be no doubt I was in earnest. But so it was that all my idees aforesaid, though I could hear them shuffling up and down the cloisters of my brain, would have no more to do with each other than Carthusians, and *could not* enter upon any of the matrimonial arrangements above noted because of their vow. And in the midst of all came such a cold ! with a catarrh at one end of my breathing tubes, a double snuffle in the middle, and a cough at the bottom. It was no go — I mean the poem ; the cough went firmly and goes still — such a hacking cough that I should like to bind it out to a wood-chopper.

As for the *Novel*, in the first place I can't write one nor conceive how any one else can ; and in the next — I would sooner be hanged than begin to print anything before I had

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Fields, Osgood & Co. had purchased the *North American Review*.

wholly finished it. Moreover, what can a man do who is in a treadmill? I believe that but for the unfortunate accident which forced me to quit the Castle of Idlesse and in some sort accept the curse of Adam by being busy without being useful, I should not only have produced more but better of its kind. I am getting bark-bound. The truth is, my brain requires a long brooding time ere it can hatch anything. As soon as the *life* comes into the thing it is quick enough in clipping the shell.

As for "terms," I know you will be as liberal as I wish you to be, and that is enough. You always have been so. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, *Wednesday, January, 1865.*

. . . I am not a fool, and you are all wrong about England. You think better of them than they deserve, and I like them full as well as you do. But because there are a few noble fellows there like Goldwin Smith whom one instinctively loves, it does n't blind me to the fact that they are not England and never will be — that England is an idea, that America is another, that they are innately hostile, and that they will fight us one of these days. God forbid! you say. Amen! say I. But we are fighting the South at this moment on no other grounds, and there are some fine fellows at the South too. Eng-

land just now is a monstrous sham, as we were five years ago when she smiled on us as one augur did at another. Now, I don't believe in being meek towards foreign nations that are never *senza guerra* (so far as we are concerned) *ne' cor de' suoi tiranni*. But I do believe in doing what is right, whether as nations or men. As for any row that the New York papers may have made about Coursal, I have not to learn at forty-five that men always behave like boys when they are angry, and the government has not gone mad after all. Were the English wiser about the Trent? About the Florida? I should not be a crazy statesman, but a poet does n't deserve to have been born in a country if he can't instinctively express what his countrymen have in their hearts. No nation is great enough to put up with insult, for it is the one advantage of greatness to be strong enough to protect herself from it. I think a war with England would be the greatest calamity but one — the being afraid of it. I would do everything to avoid it, except not telling her what I think of her in return for the charming confidences with which she so constantly favors us. Goldwin Smith tells us she has changed since 1815. But has there been any great war since? Especially any great naval war? The root of our bitterness is not that she *used* to do so and so, but that we know she would do it again. The wolf was wrong

in eating the lamb because its grandmother had muddied the stream, but it would be a silly lamb that expected to be friends with any animal whose grandmother was a wolf. Farewell. I won't fight *you*, because my father loved your grandfather and I love you.

J. R. L.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, *April 13, 1865.*

. . . The news, my dear Charles, is from Heaven. I felt a strange and tender exaltation. I wanted to laugh and I wanted to cry, and ended by holding my peace and feeling devoutly thankful. There is something magnificent in having a country to love. It is almost like what one feels for a woman. Not so tender, perhaps, but to the full as self-forgetful. I worry a little about reconstruction, but am inclined to think that matters will very much settle themselves. But I must run to my treadmill. Love and joy to all!

Ever yours,

J. R. L.

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, *July 25, 1865.*

My dear Jane, — However statures and wits may degenerate, and we become, as Donne says,

“our fathers’ shadows cast at noon,” July keeps his old force and is pleasing himself to-day with a noble display of it. It is so hot that the very locusts are dumb and cannot endure to carry on their own trade of spinning out “their long-drawn, red-hot wires of shrilly song,” as they are called in a lost poem of Pindar’s, from which I translate by direct inspiration of a scholiast turned table-tipper. Each under his cool leaf is taking his siesta. There is an unpleasing moisture even in the slender palms of the flies that fondle the restiff tip of my nose. The thin gray lives of mosquitoes are burnt up and evaporate. My anxious shirt-collar still stiffly holds its undiminished state, but with a damp foreboding of its doom. In short, dear Jane, it is just such a day as the Clerk of the Weather, abusing his opportunities, invariably appoints for public festivities — just such a day as were the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of last week. Nevertheless, I am here among my books and I am in a literal sense alive. I eat and smoke and sleep and go through all the nobler functions of a man mechanically still, and wonder at myself as at something outside of and alien to Me. For have I not worked myself lean on an “Ode for Commemoration”? Was I not so rapt with the fervor of conception as I have not been these ten years, losing my sleep, my appetite, and my flesh, those attributes to which I before alluded as nobly

uniting us in a common nature with our kind? Did I not for two days exasperate everybody that came near me by reciting passages in order to try them on? Did I not even fall backward and downward to the old folly of hopeful youth, and think I had written something *really* good at last? And am I not now enduring those retributive dumps which ever follow such sinful exultations, the Erinyes of Vanity? Did not I make John Holmes and William Story shed tears by my recitation of it (my ode) in the morning, both of 'em fervently declaring it was "noble"? Did not even the silent Rowse declare 't was in a higher mood than much or most of later verse? Did not I think, in my nervous exhilaration, that 't would be *the* feature (as reporters call it) of the day? And, after all, have I not a line in the "Daily Advertiser" calling it a "graceful poem" (or "some graceful verses," I forget which), which "was received with applause"? Why, Jane, my legs are those of grasshoppers, and my head is an autumn threshing-floor, still beating with the alternate flails of strophe and antistrophe, and an infinite virtue is gone out of me somehow — but it seems *not* into my verse as I dreamed. Well, well, Charles will like it — but then he always does, so what's the use? I am Icarus now with the cold salt sea over him instead of the warm exulting blue of ether. I am gone under, and I

will never be a fool again. You read between the lines, don't you, my dear old friend, if I may dare to call a woman so? You know my foibles — women always know our foibles, confound them! — though they always wink at the right moment and seem not to see — bless them! Like a boy, I mistook my excitement for inspiration, and here I am in the mud. You see also I am a little disappointed and a little few (*un petit peu*) vexed. I did *not* make the hit I expected, and am ashamed at having been again tempted into thinking I could write *poetry*, a delusion from which I have been tolerably free these dozen years. . . .

26th.

The Storys have got home and look as young as ever. I first saw William on Commencement day, and glad enough I was. A friendship counting nearly forty years is the finest kind of shade-tree I know of. One is safe from thunder beneath it, as under laurel — nay, more safe, for the critical bolts do not respect the sacred tree any more than if it were so much theatrical green baize. To be sure, itself is of the harmless theatrical kind often enough. Well, he and two more came up hither after dinner, and we talked and laughed and smoked and drank Domdechanei till there was n't a bald head nor a gray hair among us. Per Bacco and tobacco, how wisely silly we were! I forgot for

a few blessed hours that I was a professor, and felt as if I were something real. But Phi Beta came next day, and *was n't* I tired! Presiding from 9 A. M. till 6½ P. M. is no joke, and then up next morning at ½ past 4 to copy out and finish my ode. I have not got cool yet (I mean as to nerves), and lie awake at night thinking how much better my verses might have been, only I can't make 'em so. Well, I am printing fifty copies in 4to, and Charles will like it, as I said before, and I shan't, because I thought too well of it at first. . . .

Yours always,  
J. R. L.

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, August 28, 1865.

My dear Charles, — Why I did not come to Ashfield, as I hoped and expected, I will tell you when I see you. Like that poor Doctor in the "Inferno," I have seen before me as I sat in reverie those yellow hills with their dark-green checkers of woods and the blue undulation of edging mountains (which we looked at together that lovely Sunday morning last year) I can't say how often. Perhaps I do not wish to see them again — and in one sense I do not, they are such a beautiful picture in my memory. For I have a theory — or rather it belongs to my temperament to believe — that there are



certain things that one should take a sip at, as a bird does at a spring, and then fly away forever, taking with us a snatch of picture, the trees, the sky with its cloud-drifts of warm snow — yes, and our own image in the sliding wave too. We do not care to see our own footprints on the edge again, still less to tread in them. Somehow the geese always follow where the song-birds have been, and leave their slumpy stars in the mud themselves have made. There, by ginger! I meant to give the merest hint of a sentiment, and I have gone splash into a moral. I did not mean it, but I cannot cure myself. I shall never be a poet till I get out of the pulpit, and New England was all meeting-house when I was growing up. But I assure you I am never dull but in spite of myself.

Somehow, this cool, beautiful summer day I feel my heart go out towards you all, and am not writing because I ought. I fancy you up there in your little withdrawing-chamber of a town, with a hundred miles of oak “sporting” against the world, and it makes me happy. And when one is happy what a beautiful frame it sets the world in! Even the flies sing and do not buzz. Not one of them fancies himself an eagle and insists on perching upon the promontory of my nose, to look down in sublime isolation on my limitless forest of beard. The trees are all alive with the west wind. I can hear the

faint surf of the black-walnut at the foot of the garden as I write. In the hot weather a day or two ago it seemed only to fan itself languidly, as women do in church to prove that they are not asleep during a dull sermon. Even the locust's cry is no longer a mere impertinent *feeze* of sound or a death-whiz, as if the hot sun-ray were impaling him, but has something of satisfaction in it, as if life were wholesome warmth, indeed, but not mere frying. Altogether it seems a lovely day, and accordingly I walk to the Port presently — to pay my income tax. I must take care — I am on the edge of another moral pitfall. . . .

Your loving

J. R. L.

*To the Same*

October 12, 1865.

. . . I have been reading away steadily at Lessing till I have almost lost my moorings in the modern world. I am on his correspondence now, and find I have read 462 pages octavo out of 665 in the first volume, which is encouraging progress. However, I read all the time. I find, somewhat to my surprise, from his letters that he had the imaginative temperament in all its force. Can't work for months together; if he tries, his forehead drips with *Angstscheiss*; feels ill and looks well — in

short, is as pure a hypochondriac as the best. This has had a kind of unhealthy interest for me, for I never read my own symptoms so well described before. It is what people call hypped — but nothing will ever persuade me that I have been well these four years past. I am making up my mind to *be* well, however, and if I can sell some of my land and slip my neck out of this collar that galls me so, I should be a man again. I am not the stuff that professors are made of. Better in some ways, worse in others. . . . Anyhow my professorship is wearing me out. . . .

Yours always,

J. R. L.

*To W. D. Howells*

ELMWOOD, November 2, 1865.

My dear Sir, — I have read your articles in the "Nation" with a sense of what I may call personal pleasure that is particularly agreeable. And I have a *tell* for you, as the children say; so open your mouth and shut your eyes that I may pop in my plum! I read the article about Pompeii without the least suspicion whose it was, and found it charming. Why, here is somebody, I said to myself, who writes about Italy just as I would like to have written if I could.

It is altogether good. In the other, of course,

I knew you, for you had spoken of it, and so perhaps my judgment might be less impartial. You are doing just what I should wish you to do. The danger of our literature (with plenty of talent) seems to me to be carelessness and want of scholarly refinement. That is the rock I see ahead just now, and I fear we may go to pieces on it if we don't look sharp. Perhaps you will be inclined to send back a stone at the glass house of the "Biglow Papers" — but 't was for this very reason that I made a balance for Hosea in the pedantic parson. And then I had an object to reach which I *did* reach, and could have reached in no other way. But what I feel is (whether a sinner myself or not) that we especially need refinement in this country as a prophylactic against democracy misunderstood. And as for really good things, that is true here which is true everywhere — they cannot be made by any but those who have served a long apprenticeship — longer, it may be, here than elsewhere, since we have less hereditary and accumulated culture. Well, never mind; I like your articles as heartily as I could wish.

I write now to ask you if you could not write a paper for the "North American" on the Dante Festival? I forget whether you were in Florence at the time or not. If you were, here is a subject just in your own line, full of picturesque sentiment. I gave the Mantova

article to Mr. Norton on his return from Ashfield, where he had spent the summer, and forgot when I saw him again to ask when he would print it. I will speak with him again and let you know. He "makes up" the "Review" as he likes, for I have not time to do anything about it.

It is possible that I may come to New York during the winter vacation. If so, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again and talking over matters of mutual interest. Meanwhile I remain

Cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To Sydney H. Gay*

ELMWOOD, *December 21, 1865.*

My dear Gay, — Is "fifty dollars any object with me?" I should think so! If greenbacks of that figure grew upon trees, I should be a lusty climber. But neither are odes to be found on every bush. A great deal of virtue must go out of a man if he would write a good one, and it's no use whistling for the wind of inspiration. And it takes time, my dear Sydney — not so much for the birth as for the conception and shaping of the harmonious parts. You must have first your chaos of jostling elements and forces, the fermentation of the yet uncrystallized idea; then the brooding of the creative imagi-

nation ; and then the birth of your star or comet or, unhappily too often, of your meteor, which falls to earth a shapeless jelly. I know so well how certain things are done that — I can't do them !

I might have written you, perhaps, a rhymed editorial — but an ode ? The occasion was a good one, and I am half inclined to meditate upon it and see if I can't write one *après coup* and print it in my next volume, whenever that comes. I must claim for my verses, if no other merit, at least that of forethought and some conception of the serious demands of the Muse.

As for pay, I am lucky, though it puzzles me. The public, with a shocking want of discrimination, buy everybody's books but mine, and yet my verses are worth as much to a magazine as any other author's. However, that's their affair, and not mine. For some years I have had twice fifty for whatever I write, and three or four times fifty for a long poem.

I was very glad to hear from you again, and I hope to see you and other old friends this winter, as I have promised to go to New York in vacation. . . . Remember me to whoever remembers me, and I am as always,

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

# V

1866-1868

*Life at Elmwood. — Studies. — Lectures. — Political and literary essays in the "North American Review" and the "Atlantic Monthly." — "The Nation." — The "Commemoration Ode." — "The Nightingale in the Study."*

*Letters to E. L. Godkin, E. C. Stedman, Leslie Stephen, C. E. Norton, H. W. Longfellow, T. W. Higginson, J. T. Fields, Miss Norton, J. B. Thayer, T. W. Parsons, W. D. Howells.*

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, January 10, 1866.

MY dear Sir, — . . . I have got something half written for you and hope to finish it to-day — some macaronic verses on the editorial sham-fight at Richmond, under some such title as "Kettleo-Pottomachia." I am not yet sure whether it is not dull. However, I will send it, and you can use it or not as you like. I had begun an essay on "Autographs," when I was drawn off by this. Meanwhile I have raked out of my desk a little poem which I wrote for an autograph for the St. Louis

Fair two years ago. (The Muse does n't come often to Professors!) I do not know that it has ever been printed and don't think it has. I send it merely to justify my name on your list of contributors.<sup>1</sup> You can put my initials under it — otherwise I prefer the anonymous. I find excellent matter in the "Nation," and always read it *through*. Pray tell Mr. Howells with how much pleasure I read his German sketch — and not I alone.

I will send you the macaronics in a day or two, and you may put them in the fire if you like. . . .

Faithfully yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, *January 19, 1866.*

My dear Godkin, — Ecce iterum Crispinus! Here's Monsieur Tonson come again! It never rains but it pours, and you've lent *me* your umberil! You remember how Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines, whenever they are hard-bested, sit down and compose "the following verses"? Well, 't is my case precisely. I expected to have sent you the first half of my hexameters this morning, but Rowse came out last evening and knocked that plan on the head. He found me a fifteen-inch bore, for I was full of my heroics

<sup>1</sup> To the *Nation*.



and would read 'em to him, though he is as innocent of Latin as a Methodist class-leader. However, he charitably spent the night, and forgot his wrongs in whiskey-toddy. So the epic must wait, which I am sorry for. If left too long, 't will be flat as an oyster out of season. As I was lying in bed this morning musing over this, the ditty I enclose literally *ist mir eingefallen*, to use the happy German phrase — dropped into me from the Lord knows where. The first stanza came into my head complete, as Minerva came out of, etc. *This*, thought I, is inspiration! So, as I took my bath, I hummed it over, and, breakfast done, wrote it out for you, and here it is. Now that it's warm it seems to me not bad. How it will smack in the cold-mutton next-day of print I can't say, but *I* rather like cold mutton. I think it had better not have my name, but go to the general credit of your "able staff." But you may do as you like about that. *I*, for one, don't fancy this onomatopœia style of publishing, which makes more of names than things. You don't encourage me about the macaronics. Will they do? Be frank. I am perfectly reasonable and can use them otherwise. I suppose I am to thank *you* for the article on Insurance, which tickled me thoroughly. So farewell, and you shan't hear from me again for a twelvemonth.

Cordially yours,

11

J. R. L.

*To E. C. Stedman*

ELMWOOD, *February 12, 1866.*

My dear Sir, — I think one of the greatest pleasures is to come across a poem that one can honestly like; it's like finding a new flower. If, at the same time, one can please the author by telling him so, all the better. I liked "Alice of Monmouth," and felt bound to say so. I am glad to find that what I said did not mislike you — for I believe I have earned in some quarters a somewhat cynical reputation, because I have always insisted on reducing our criticism to a specie standard. If I don't like a thing and there's otherwise no harm in it, I hold my tongue. It's so hard to say anything that will not seem cold to a young author or a young mother! Does not the latter (for I will avoid kittle ice) think she has (*know* she has) brought into the world a new wonder for beauty, genius, goodness? Is not all about it miraculous? However, *your* baby is now some three years old; and, since you ask me, I will answer frankly that I did not like Alektryôn, and don't think him at all to be compared to his sister Alice — a strutting fellow that wants to make me believe he can crow in ancient Greek. Alice is Christian, modern, American, and that's why I like her. I don't believe in these modern antiques — no, not in Landor, not in Swinburne, not in

any of 'em. They are all wrong. It's like writing Latin verses — the material you work in is dead. It's the difference between Chaucer and Gower. You see what I mean — or, at any rate, that I have a meaning, which is the main thing. It is like these everlasting Venuses our sculptors give us. They thrust the right foot forth a little and call it a "Greek Slave"; the left, and lo, a "White Captive"! Well, well, I won't bore you with a sermon; but you asked me, and so I answered. If I did not think you had better things in you I should have evaded with a civil bow.

And now for business. I have no doubt, from the hints you give me of your purpose, that I shall like your paper for the "North American Review." The one you sent me in print I liked. We do not ask that our contributors should always agree with *us* — except in politics; of course *there* the "Review" must be consistent. But otherwise — anybody who *has ideas* is thrice welcome. The April number is already full, but the sooner you send it the better.

I shall be in New York next week if nothing happens, and shall hope to see you there. If ever you come this way, I shall count on your coming out to my Doubting Castle here among the elms.

Cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To Leslie Stephen*

ELMWOOD, April 10, 1866.

My dear Stephen,— I am not very good at writing letters at any rate, and this is the first one I have sent across the Atlantic since our war began. That is now five years ago, but so crowded with events that it seems hardly yesterday that Sumter was fired on. Montaigne, and Byron after him (and both of 'em after Plutarch, if I remember), are all wrong in saying that life is long in proportion to its eventfulness or the movement of thought it has forced upon us. On the contrary, I am persuaded that periods of revolution and excitement cheat us of half our days; and that a pioneer backwoodsman, who knows no changes of ministry but those of the seasons, and whose greatest events are the coming into office and falling of the leaves, is the only mortal who knows what length of years is. It seems to me as if it were only a day or two since I parted with you at the corner of the lane, since we walked together to Beaver Brook, since I told you, as we came down the hill on our way home, that I had no gift of prophecy, but that I had an *instinct* that the American people would come out of the war stronger than ever. I confess I have had an almost invincible repugnance to writing again to England. I share with the great body of my countrymen in a bitter-

ness (half resentment and half regret) which I cannot yet get over. I do not mean that, if my heart could be taken out after death, *Delenda est Anglia* would be found written on it — for I know what the land we sprung from, and which we have not disgraced, is worth to freedom and civilization; but I cannot forget the insult so readily as I might the injury of the last five years. But I love my English friends none the less — nay, perhaps the more, because they have been *her* friends, too, who is dearer to me for her trials and for the victory which I am sure she will be great enough to use gently. There! like a true New-Englander I have cleared my conscience, and I can allow a little play to my nature.

First of all, for it is first in my thoughts, I am glad to hear that you are coming again. Mrs. Lowell and I have always remembered you with an affectionate interest, and shall feel wronged if you do not come to us directly on your arrival and aim at us when you start. That is, you must take passage for Boston (which saves you five guineas), and then come directly hither without going to a hotel, where the charges are now worse than ever. . . .

I was interested in what you told me of the professorship.<sup>1</sup> I have heard very little about

<sup>1</sup> A professorship — lectureship, rather — which Mr. Yates Thompson proposed to found at Cambridge for American lectures. It was, I think, declined by the Senate. — L. S.

it, having abstained from English newspapers for these five years as strictly as a Pythagorean from beans. They need not be frightened, so far as we are concerned. We do not want to make Socinians of 'em, poor fellows! Their sow shall farrow in spite of the Black Douglas. What amused me most was the suggestion that we should have sent Mr. Bancroft, of all men in the world! Would n't you smile if I were to write you seriously that I hoped the English Government would not send out Roebuck as minister at Washington? Country parsons know as little about the other world as about this, and one really sees no means they have of knowing even so much. I should pity their parishes if they were not made up of "Britishers," as you persist in thinking that we call you. But, seriously, I doubt if the lectureship would have done much good. England *can't* like America, do what she or we will, and I doubt if I could, were I an Englishman. But I think the usages of society should hold between nations, and see no particular use in her taking every opportunity to *tell* us how disagreeable and vulgar we are. What *riled* me was the quiet assumption that we had n't, could n't, and had no right to have, a country over here. They seem to forget that more than half the people of the North have roots, as I have, that run down more than two hundred years deep into this new-world

soil — that we have not a thought nor a hope that is not American — and they may make up their minds that it is not what Mr. Disraeli calls a “territorial democracy,” but democracy itself, that makes us strong. If they could only understand that we feel like an *old* country over here, and not a sutler’s camp, they would be less afraid of any active propagandism of ours. We would not rob you of a single one of your valuable institutions — state church, peerage, pauperage — so long as you like ’em and like to pay for ’em. We really have no use for such things, and you can leave your doors unlocked, so far as we are concerned. *I* don’t understand your English taste for what you call “respectability” (*I* should call it “whitechokerism”), thinking, as *I* do, that the one thing worth striving for in this world is a state founded on pure manhood, where everybody has a chance given him to better himself, and where the less costume and the more reality there is, the better. As for “Socinianism,” heavens! we’ve got several centuries ahead of *that*, some of us, or behind it, if you please. Why could n’t they have said “Semi-Pelagianism”? There is a plesiosaurian word long enough to scare one a little! If you should infect ’em with that, ’t would be worse than the rinderpest. But, alas, there does n’t seem to be such a thing as an *esel*pest! *That* kind of animal seems to have a

prodigious constitution. How they do survive everything, wagging their sacred ears in the pulpit, sticking their pens behind 'em in the Foreign Office (they're very convenient for that — I mean the ears), and never hearing anything through 'em on the Bench or in Parliament! Sacred animal, as safe from ideas as the laurel from lightning!

We have one of the breed, I fear, just now for President, with all the obstinacy of a weak mind and a strong constitution. But I think the people will hold out longer than he, and show how much stronger an united purpose is than a selfish one. Johnson is really foolish enough to think that he can make himself President for a second term by uniting in his favor the loyalty of both ends of the country. As if the Southern people, whose notion of the chase is to hunt loyalists the moment our troops are withdrawn (you know their passion for field-sports was one of the grounds of sympathy which was discovered between you and them), would ever forgive *him*. But I have the same confidence as ever (impudent Yankee that I am) in the sense and nerve of the people; and as they put down the same combination in the field, so they will at the polls, so soon as they understand what it means. Meanwhile we are gaining time — a great thing; the Southerners are learning again to be interested in *national*



politics — a still greater thing; and matters are settling in a natural way, as they should and must at last by the necessities of trade and agriculture. Mr. Hosea Biglow addresses his constituents on this matter in the *May* number of the "Atlantic Monthly," and I should like you to read his speech (especially as it is to be his last), if the magazine is to be come at in any London reading-room. I would not have you spend a shilling for it, nor will I send it, for fear it should cost you its weight in gold, after I had paid the postage; for the wonders of our international postal system are past my finding out.

We are having an April whimsical beyond the womanly privilege of April. Last Thursday my thermometer marked 76° of Fahrenheit in the shade, and on Sunday morning there were three inches of snow on the ground. But the grass is beginning to green, the lilac buds are swelling, and I can hear the chirping of a brood of chickens in the cellar as I write. What a blessing is the quiet indifference of nature amid all our hurry and worry and turmoil! But for that it seems to me as if I could never have endured the last five years. However, we are all tougher than we think, and have also our kind of dogged persistency in living. Our constitutions adapt themselves to the slow poison of the world till we become mithridatized at last.

Now remember that your first dinner in America is to be eaten with me, and I only hope you won't arrive on one of those days of household dyspepsia — washing or ironing day. But, after all, the real flavor of a dinner is the welcome, and yours will be hearty. You shall have a new brier-wood pipe — though I am sorry to say that the war has somehow got into the tobacco — and I have some excellent materials for the making of nightcaps, in which there shall be acres of pleasant dreams without a single toadstool of headache (and how full-grown they do get sometimes in a night!) in their whole expansion.

I am desired by the American Eagle (who is a familiar of mine caught on the coins of my country) to request you to present her compliments to the British Lion, and say to him that she does *not* (as he seems to think) spend *all* her time in trying to find a chance to pick out his eyes, having vastly more important things to occupy her mind about. She really can't conceive how they can quarrel when *his* place is on the ground and *hers* in the air — a moral on which she begs him to meditate. *She* does n't wish to change, having a natural fondness for large views. "As for Fenians," she adds, "tell him to spell it Fainéants, as we do over here, and he will enjoy his dinner again."

Is n't it lucky that I don't write often? Like

a woman, I put the main thing in my P. S., which is, that I am, with the kindest recollections,

Very truly your friend,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To E. C. Stedman*

ELMWOOD, May 15, 1866.

My dear Sir, — Pray forgive me a neglect which was hardly my fault. Your article was brought to me with several other matters from the post while I was in the midst of a business which must be done with before a fixed day. They were all laid upon my desk, got shuffled up with an already frightful heap, and when I had done my work I forgot all about them — not knowing that your paper was among them. Your note gave me a shiver. I hunted over my papers, found the article, read it, liked it, and shall print it with great pleasure. I agree with your general view and with most of the individual criticisms so far as I know anything about the writers. I found some names I had never heard of before — which told me I was growing old — for I used to keep pretty well *au courant*. I shall take the liberty to make a verbal change here and there, such as I am sure you would agree to could we talk the matter over. I think, for example, you speak rather too well of young Lytton, whom I regard

both as an impostor and an antinomian heretic. Swinburne I must modify a little, as you will see, to make the "Review" consistent with itself. But you need not be afraid of not knowing your own child again.

How comes on the "Theocritus"? I feel greatly interested in your success. I know of no English translation that is good for anything — indeed, I have only a faint recollection that I ever saw one. I *seem* to remember (as we Yankees say) a version of Elizabeth's time from which I have somewhere read extracts. The work appears to me not only a thing eminently fit to be done, but one by which solid reputation may be made. It is a rare opportunity, and particularly suited to a treatment in English hexameters. Pray don't neglect it, and don't hurry it. As one who has a sincere interest in you, will you pardon my saying that I fear you *improvise* a little too much? I have a fancy that long brooding is the only thing that will assure us whether our eggs are chalk or have a winged life hidden in them. I know very well the exigencies of authorship — *haud inexpertus loquor* — and that's the reason I hold up a warning finger.

I see you have been writing a naughty poem called "Anonyma." The poem itself I have not seen. I own I am a little afraid of the *demi-monde*, for 'tis the side where the devil

always has us at an advantage. One thing I especially liked in your "Alice" was its *tendency*. Don't direct your next letter to the Rev. Mr. L. You see a main part of my duty for some years past has been preaching to ingenuous youth, and I fall naturally into it.

With kind remembrances from Mrs. Lowell and myself to you and Mrs. Stedman,

I remain very truly yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, July 10, 1866.

. . . The older I grow the more I am convinced that [there] are no satisfactions so deep and so permanent as our sympathies with outward nature. I have not said just what I meant, for we are thrilled even more by any spectacle of human heroism. But the others seem to bind our lives together by a more visible and unbroken chain of purifying and softening emotion. In this way the flowering of the buttercups is always a great and I may truly say religious event in my year. But I am talking too unguardedly. You know what a deep distrust I have of the poetical temperament, with its self-deceptions, its real unrealities, and its power of sometimes unblest magic, building its New Jerusalems in a sunset cloud rather than in the world of actuality and man. . . .

I have been reading lately as vastly as usual, and am now half through Julian Schmidt's history of French literature since '89. His history of modern German literature is the best I know. The one I am reading is good also. He is a very masculine critic, of the Lessing school, but with the "modern improvements" — not so original, but drawing his resources from a wider surface. I have also been making my way into Lucretius somewhat. I don't quite *taste* him yet, but I see clearly that he beats all the Latin poets in poetic beauty of phrase. There is obscurely in him an almost Wordsworthian love of nature. And that reminds me that I have been reading again the "Prelude" and the "Excursion" with gushes of intense satisfaction. His poetry is like the country he lived in. It's hard work getting to the fine points of view — but, once there, what is there like it for breadth of view and a certain more ethereal atmosphere that clarifies our senses, as it were, and through them our minds? His poetry reminds one of the old baronial housekeeping. What splendor and what sordidness in one! . . .

*To H. W. Longfellow*

ELMWOOD, September 14, 1866.

My dear Longfellow, — I should be very glad to come down and dine with you at Nahant and especially to meet Agassiz, but I am

so full of work just now that I can fix no day. If I find I can before you come up, I will. I am as usual keeping abreast of a steam power-press, which has the advantage over brain power that it does not get tired and that you have [only] to open a valve and it goes of itself—which I find is not the case with the brain, though some writers seem to act as if it were.

I have been writing an introduction to the new "Biglow" series, on Yankeeisms and the like, which grew under my hands till it will make some sixty pages of print, and now I am at work on Mr. Johnson and his policy. Oh, these pot-boilers!

I thank you heartily for the kind things (just like you!) you said to Mrs. Hawthorne about Hawthorne's Life. Of course, I should like to do it very much. Whether I can, is another question. I have never tried my hand at any such thing, and it will take moreover so much time. There are seventeen quartos of "Diary"—a splendid mine, to be sure, but consider the amount of digging. And Mrs. H. tells me there are few letters. If you could ever find time to jot down some of your recollections and also the names of anybody you can think of likely to know anything, it would be a great kindness.

What an anti-Johnson lecturer we have in Johnson! Sumner has been right about the *cuss* from the first, and I was wrong.

Give kisses to all the children for me and bid them not forget me. That little procession with the books to bid you good-night is one of the sweetest pictures in my gallery.

Always yours

J. R. L.

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, *September 25, 1866.*

My dear Godkin, — I have had you on my conscience these six months, but your paper is so good that I am afraid to write for it lest I excite unsavory comparisons to my own detriment. I like it altogether. . . . Every Friday morning when the "Nation" comes, I fill my pipe and read it from beginning to end. Do you do it all yourself? Or are there really so many clever men in the country?

I could n't answer your note offhand, for I was very busy with a hundred pages of proofs to read, but to-day I sat down and did what I could to answer ("fill," I think, is the proper word) your order. I fear I have not in stock enough of the kind of goods you want. The truth is, I feel it more every day that I belong to an older generation than you young fellows. I have not the journalist's knack of *shunting* my mind off upon another course at a moment's warning. My track is a single one, I fear, and has too few turn-outs in it. I shall have to



subside ere long into the "heavy-father" parts. My very style belongs to the last century, and drops too readily into the sententious and elaborately historical manner. You want Spencer rifles, and I send you a train of siege guns spiked for action. Believe me, I was lively once, and may recover it; but I fear me much I have suffered a professor change that has gone too deep for healing. I am perfectly conscious of it and cannot yet help it. But I am at work on myself. Fancy a fellow whose latest reading is Wordsworth's prefaces and such things (by the latest I mean most modern), and who never sees any newspaper but the "Daily Advertiser," undertaking to compete with you youngsters, supple with the daily gymnastics of "Saturday Reviews," "Pall Mall Gazettes" (do they still exist, or am I pleiocene even in this?), and such like marvels of modern intellect! I am conscious of the absurdity, that's one comfort.

I send you my article, full of these emotions (the "full" means *me*, and the sentence should be turned end for end, but that is just my clumsiness); cut up, cut down, cut out, cut in, turn upside-down or end-wise, transpose, dispose, burn if you like, and I shall feel that I have deserved it all. 'T is not my line. Charles keeps me writing political articles for the "North American Review," and vows he likes 'em, and I see they're full of faults as Andrew Johnson

is of vulgarity. I had some rhymes in my head one day about a man with a "policy," which had a hopeful air about 'em, but I lost 'em clean out of my memory while I was hearing my classes mistranslate Italian and mispronounce Spanish.

Nevertheless, try me again. I may do better. Nobody knows what's in him till it is knocked out by his running against some granite post of necessity. I don't believe even birds sing when they get their fill of worms. If they are fasting, they try to drown the clamor of their poor little stomachs by those pipings which foolish people are always holding up as an example to poets. We follow it a little too faithfully, I admit, and are apt to sing the same song over and over again till the public gets tired of us. But what then? We are called on for so much new milk every day, and is not the cow with the iron tail sent by a good Providence for *us* also? Spare the water in your whiskey toddy and be generous with it in your articles, is the law of nature for the periodical writer.

Of course, if you print my article, let it be anonymous. . . .

Cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To C. E. Norton**ELMWOOD, September 25, 1866.*

. . . I am tired to-night, having to-day corrected the proofs of twenty-eight pages of "North American Review" politics and seventy of my Introduction to the new "Biglows" — for to such outrageous length has the latter spun itself out, with only a single lead between the lines. I don't think (to be candid) that either of 'em amounts to much except in pages. . . .

. . . I have another calf — I don't mean to my leg, but a bossy. Also I have sold this week \$42 worth of pig — an old sow and three little piggiennies. Also I have begun faintly to sue a man for my marsh-grass of last year. As he is an Irishman, I suppose he will set my barn afire. Crops are good, except melons, for which it has been too cold. Pears we have had plenty and good. You feel as if you had done something when you offer anybody fruit from a tree you planted twenty years ago. I wish I could feel so of my intellectual plantations. I have amused myself by stuffing the pockets of the printer's devil with Bartletts and watching the expansive effect on his pale-yellow face. He looks at me now when he meets me as if I were a man and — a great-uncle we'll say. I hope they won't give him the cholera, which has killed, I hear, nine people in the Port. And

let me tell you something worth telling. Dr. Wyman's brother Rufus heard on his way out of town that three people had been left uncared for in a house. He jumped off the car, found them, and tended them till they died. I shall think better of the eight-hour movement so long as I live.<sup>1</sup> Isn't it good? As good, I think, as going to the war. . . .

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, October 19, 1866.

. . . I send you a paragraph, which you may insert if you like among your skirmishers. Or make one yourself on the same topic, which deserves some sort of notice. . . .

I was glad to see some of your correspondents after Mr. Moon. He did well enough for Alford, who knew even less than himself; but, after all, he was never anything but green cheese, in whom conceit is naturally breeding maggots. I have not seen his article in the "Round Table," but the notion of his undertaking to joust with a doughty old champion like Marsh<sup>2</sup> is very amusing. Mr. Marsh's articles are admirably solid. His style is his weak point. It is apt to be what I should call "congregational." But he is much better than usual in the "Nation" thus far. As an editor, I should find fault

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wyman was an advocate of the movement.

<sup>2</sup> The late Hon. George P. Marsh.

with his articles as being too palpably parts of a book. He does not get under way quite rapidly enough for a newspaper. But all he says is worth reading for its matter. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, October 19, 1866.

. . . I have been working hard, and if my liver will let me alone, as it does now, am likely to go on all winter. And on *what* do you suppose? I have taken up one of the unfinished tales of the "Nooning," and it grew to a poem of near seven hundred lines! It is mainly descriptive. First, a sketch of the narrator, then his "prelude," then his "tale." I describe an old inn and its landlord, bar-room, etc. It is very homely, but right from nature. I have lent it to Child and hope he will like it, for if he doesn't I shall feel discouraged. It was very interesting to take up a thread dropt so long ago, and curious as a phenomenon of memory to find how continuous it had remained in my mind, and how I could go on as if I had let it fall only yesterday. . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, October 22, 1866.

. . . I have not seen the "Life of Percival," but, oddly enough, my fairy-tale (as you will see) turns on the weakness of the poetical

temperament. You know what a contempt I have for it—mixed with pity. It *must* be oversensitive, or it could not feel all those unnoticed nothings which it is its business to record for other people; and this sensitiveness, making it more or less solitary, makes it also as a necessary consequence egotistic. I saw Percival once—sat nearly opposite him at table in Madison, Wisconsin—a shabby-looking little man (dirty-looking, I had almost said), with a goodish head, but no way remarkable. I did not speak with him. He had a singular talent for languages, I was told, and I think some one showed me some verses of his in German. The “Advertiser” this morning compares him with Goethe, God save the mark! Two men *more* unlike could hardly be found. The Herr Geheimerath had something of that Ben Franklin quality in him which one recognizes also in Shakespeare. In such natures the imagination seems to spire up like a Gothic cathedral over a prodigiously solid crypt of common-sense, so that its lightness stands secure on the consciousness of an immovable basis, and is logically knit up with it. This heavy understanding is the foundation of great characters, it seems to me. It is like prudence—a beggarly quality in itself, but without it all other finer ones are good for little. . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, October 25, 1866.

. . . My dear boy, I have in my pocket \$820 for my last six weeks' work, and mean for the first time in my life to make an investment of money earned! . . .

I sent for the "Life of Percival," and found it dullish. But perhaps I needed some more pungent food in my rather dragged-out condition. It is execrably done, to be sure. But there is not a gleam of genius in the book, and the specifications of his metrification (after his petrification) are incredibly bad. His mode of life latterly was curious — but much as that of a musquash would be. A bachelor may do anything. There is no ballast like a wife and children. His linguistic tastes interested me, but do not astonish me so much as they do his biographer, for whoever has been bitten by that gadfly knows that there is scarce a monomania so utterly absorbing. I call it a monomania when one cannot give himself wholly to it. Perhaps I am bitter. But I was disappointed, for I thought Percival *had* some genius. As it is, he strikes me rather as one of the men who *talk* about high aims rather than have them. This is better than nothing, I grant, for it proves one conscious that there are such things. But I think that a man who really has them — well,

he won't see his shaft quiver in the shield of the sun, maybe, but he will make a long shot for all that. In character, Percival seems to have been a Coleridge who had some pride of independence, a Coleridge with scruples. . . .

What first disgusted me with him was the pretended attempt at suicide. If he had been in earnest, he would never have made himself visible in the orchard in time to be antidoted with coffee. It gives a flavor of insincerity to all the rest that follows. I suppose scarce a young man of sensibility ever grew his shell who did n't, during the process, meditate suicide a great many times. I remember in '39 putting a cocked pistol to my forehead — and being afraid to pull the trigger, of which I was heartily ashamed, and am still whenever I think of it. Had I been in earnest, why, of course, you would never have had the incomparable advantage of my friendship. But, of course, I was only flattering myself. I am glad now that I was too healthy, for it is only your feeble Jerusalems that fairly carry the thing out and rid the world of what would have been mere nuisances.

We have been having lately the most marvellous moon-clarities (*there* the French lingo beats us) that ever were seen, and my conservative English elms, who stick to their old June fashions in spite of frost, are enough to take



your breath away. If I could make a verse that would move people as they do *me*, I should be sure I was a poet. But unhappily I have discourse of reason. . . .

*To E. C. Stedman*

ELMWOOD, November 26, 1866.

My dear Sir, — I thank you heartily for your remembrance and for the copy of your clever satire,<sup>1</sup> which I had not seen. It is full of good hits and it is a pity that you had not gone on, for *crescit eundo* is specially true of liveliness (where there is any), and it takes a little time for the mind to get limber. I am truly glad that you like the new "Biglow Papers," and am obliged to you for saying so. I have not seen any notices of them, and care very little for such things. Indeed, I avoid seeing them so far as I can. I have sometimes wished that I cared more for the public than I do, but it is hard to change a habit of near thirty years; but I *do* like to be liked by my friends, and I hope always to reckon you among them. I still keep warm in my heart the pleasure which your cordial reception gave me last winter in New York. I suppose this series wants something of the first-jump (as Montaigne calls it) gayety and good spirits of the earlier ones, but I think there is better stuff in it for all that. If I am less of an

<sup>1</sup> "A Reconstruction Letter."

improvisator, I hope I am getting to be more of an artist, though I miss the crowd of eager fancies that used to haunt me night and day. Invention is the faculty which ages first, and the material to work in is scantied, while the skill to shape it grows.

I am trying to grow young again by a dip in the past. I have been overhauling my old manuscripts, and hope to finish some beginnings which have stood still ever since I was benumbed by sitting down in a professor's chair. One of these will appear in the January "Atlantic," and I wish you to like it. The best parts of it have been lying in my desk these fifteen years. This would have more than satisfied Horace! As for me, I do not find that anything ripens in manuscript like pears in a drawer, for I cannot reform what I have once written. To carry a thing long in the mind is my recipe. It settles and clarifies, and you have only to tap it and draw it off the lees. I fancy this is what Horace meant after all.

I have not seen Swinburne's new volume — but a poem or two from it which I have seen shocked me, and I am not squeamish. . . . I am too old to have a painted *hetaira* palmed off on me for a Muse, and I hold unchastity of mind to be worse than that of body. Why should a man by choice go down to live in his cellar, instead of mounting to those fair upper

chambers which look towards the sunrise of that Easter which shall greet the resurrection of the soul from the body of this death? *Virginibus puerisque?* To be sure! let no man write a line that he would not have his daughter read. When a man begins to lust after the Muse instead of loving her, he may be sure that it is never the Muse that he embraces. But I have outlived many heresies, and shall outlive this new Adamite one of Swinburne. The true Church of poetry is founded on a rock, and I have no fear that these smutchy back-doors of hell shall prevail against her. . . .

I wish you and Mrs. Stedman would make us a little visit. Why not come at Christmas and warm yourselves by our Yule-log? We have a real one still — a good, old-fashioned fire of our own wood. Don't neglect Theocritus. It is an excellent thing to do, and to be done in hexameters. Mrs. Lowell joins me in cordial remembrance to you both, and I remain

Always truly yours,  
J. R. LOWELL.

*To H. W. Longfellow*

ELMWOOD, February 27, 1867.

My dear Longfellow, — On looking back, I find that our personal intercourse is now of near thirty years' date. It began on your part, in a note acknowledging my "Class-poem" much

more kindly than it deserved. Since then it has ripened into friendship, and there has never been a jar between us. If there had been, it would certainly have been my fault and not yours. Friendship is called the wine of life, and there certainly is a stimulus in it that warms and inspires as we grow older. Ours should have some body to have kept so long.

I planned you a little surprise in the "Advertiser" for your birthday breakfast. I hope my nosegay did not spoil the flavor of your coffee. It is a hard thing to make one that will wholly please, for some flowers will not bear to be handled without wilting, and the kind I have tried to make a pretty bunch of is of that variety. But let me hope the best from your kindness, if not from their color or perfume.

In case they should please you (and because there was one misprint in the "Advertiser," and two phrases which I have now made more to my mind), I have copied them that you might have them in my own handwriting.

In print, you see, I have omitted the tell-tale ciphers — not that there was anything to regret in them, for we have a proverbial phrase, "like sixty," which implies not only unabated but extraordinary vigor.

Wishing you as many happy returns as a wise man should desire, I remain always

Affectionately yours, J. R. L.

*To T. W. Higginson*

ELMWOOD, March 28, 1867.

My dear Higginson, — Your criticism<sup>1</sup> is perfectly just, and I am much obliged to you for it — though I might defend myself, I believe, by some constructions even looser in some of the Greek choruses. But, on the whole, where I have my choice I prefer to make sense. The fact is that the “Ode” was written at a heat — such a one, indeed, as leaves one colder than common afterwards — and I have hardly looked at it since. There is a horrible truth in the *littera scripta manet*, and the confounded things make mouths at us when we try to alter, but I think *this* may do: —

Ere yet the sharp, decisive word  
Redden the cannon's lips, and while the sword.

On looking farther, I find to my intense disgust a verse without a mate in the last stanza but one, and I must put in a patch. If I had only kept my manuscript! We must read, —

<sup>1</sup> The criticism was, apparently, on the construction of the verses in stanza v., which still stand in the poem as follows:

Ere yet the sharp, decisive word  
Light the black lips of cannon, and the sword  
Dreams in its easeful sheath.

The “Commemoration Ode” was about to be reprinted in the *Harvard Memorial Biographies*, edited by Colonel Higginson.

And bid her navies, that so lately hurled  
Their crashing battle, hold their thunders in,

or else the poor "world" just below will have  
no law of gravitation to hold itself up by. I  
know I had something better originally, but I  
can't get it back.<sup>1</sup>

*Item*, in the eighth please make this change:

Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave,  
But through those constellations go  
That shed celestial influence on the brave.  
If life were but to draw this dusty breath  
That doth our wits enslave,  
And with the crowd to hurry to and fro,  
Seeking we know not what, and finding death,  
These did unwisely; but if living be,  
As some are born to know,  
The power to ennoble, and inspire  
In other souls our brave desire  
For fruit, not leaves, of Time's immortal tree,  
These truly live, our thought's essential fire,  
And to the saner, etc.

There! I won't open the book again, or I shall  
write you another ode instead of mending this.

<sup>1</sup> None of the corrections and additions suggested in this letter were made in the "Ode" as printed in the *Memorial Biographies*. "Apparently I begged off from them," Colonel Higginson writes, "or perhaps they were just too late. Some years afterwards Lowell wrote me a letter (now lost) saying that he had kept no copy, and wished to use them. Apparently they could not then be found. One of the emendations [the one to which this is a note] he seems to have remembered and used."

But in this latter passage the metre wanted limbering a little — it was *built* too much with blank-verse bricks — and I think I have bettered it, at least to the ear.

Pray give my kind regards to Mrs. Higginson, and tell her I am glad she can find spring *anywhere* this year, though she has to go to the "Biglow Papers" for it. I wrote those verses (nearly all of them) quite twenty years ago, and am pleased to think the colors are so fast. But beg her not to wash them too hard or they may *run*. I think (though in the midst of them I laugh at "the catalogue style") they — the verses — are a little too preraphaelitish, too much like a bill of particulars. Tempted by her applause, I have just read them over, and this is what comes of it in one who has to write criticisms every quarter. If I live this life much longer, I shall do nothing but profess and review.

If your new edition is to be printed here, will you order proofs sent me? I wish it could be said somewhere that the "Ode" is reprinted "by request," or something of the kind. I told Child so before, but he said no. It strikes me in the same way now. It looks as if *I* had thrust it in there, a thought that makes me red. Why not at the head of it, after the title — "(reprinted by permission)"? I don't wish to give it too much importance, but it worries me.

I hope my house may seem nearer the next time you are in Cambridge. I remain

Very truly yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, Tuesday.

My dear Higginson, — Any change in what the ear has grown wonted to is at first unpleasing; but you shall do as you like with *your* copy of the "Ode," and of mine *farò altro governo* if, when I reprint it in a volume, I am as discontent with that passage as now. But print yours as it is and I shall be satisfied.

Yours very truly,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, Friday, 1867.

My dear Godkin, — I send back the proof, which seems flat enough now, as they all do, confound 'em! The lively pop of the cork has so much power over the imagination at first! I have not changed it except in striking out some of the weakest verses. The truth is one *can't*. They are like balloons that have snapped the cord. We can gaze wistfully after, but cannot overtake them.

The "Nation" is my weekly refreshment. It



is, in my judgment, really *excellent* — so full of good manners, good sense, and good writing; and our journals are commonly crammed with crudeness, common-place, and cussedness! *τρία καππα κακιοτα* (put on the accents yourself — I throw you in the Greek).

I laughed heartily (remembering your honest laugh at Shady Hill) over your comments on Child's (I suppose) letter anent Alford. 'Tis the curse of an editor that he must always be right. Ah, when I'm once out of the "North American Review," won't I kick up my heels and be as ignorant as I please! But beware of omniscience. There is death in *that* pot, however it be with others. It excites jealousy, to begin with.

Come on soon again.

Ever yours truly,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, June 5, 1867.

. . . This morning Lafarge came to see me, and wants to illustrate some of my poems. I was pleased and told him so, and read him two or three he had never seen. He seemed to like them. If he did not, he owes it to your mother, for without her copies I had been harmless. How perennially green we poets are! Pine trees are nothing to us, and they make little poems

too, that's what keeps *them* so. I like Lafarge (are there two f's in his name?) very much. He really thinks, and has ideas — a very uncommon man.

As for myself, I am turned contractor of hammock-netting for the orioles, taking my pay in notes. I throw strings out of window and they snap them up at once. They sit in the cherry tree hard by and warble "Hurry up! hurry up!" I never found out before just what they said. But if you listen you will find that this is what they first say. A vulgarism, I admit, but native. They are rather imperious with me. We are having just such a spring as I love and as justifies my description in the "Biglow Papers," first coy and then — what grass! My mind (or whatever it is: I leave that to you who bother yourselves with metaphysics) turns graminivorous and ruminant. I am promoted to be a cow. I wallow in it and know how sweet it tastes. I shall give milk one of these days. There never was such a season, if one only did not have to lecture and write articles. There never *is* such a season, and that shows what a poet God is. He says the same thing over to us so often and always new. Here I've been reading the same poem for near half a century, and never had a notion what the buttercup in the third stanza meant before. But I won't tell. I'm going to have it all to myself. We are

growing like debt. Jack himself would have thought well of my beans, and as for pease a cane won't answer to measure 'em with. Nothing but a lark can beat them. I wish I could be planted every year and come up so fresh. Well, we must comfort ourselves with St. Paul's rather one-legged simile, I suppose. But I shall be happy to rise again after I'm planted, as fresh and undiscouraged as a pea. . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, *June 27, 1867.*

My dear Charles, — It is raining fast from the northeast, and I have three tons of hay out. I cannot do anything with the weather this summer. It has no more consideration for the natural feelings of a prophet than the war had for those of Mr. Seward. The latter, I see by the papers this morning, has been appealing at Hartford to posterity, leaving his fame, like Lord Bacon, to distant generations. It is a good precedent, and I follow it, leaving the year 1967 to pronounce whether, after all the rain we have had, I was not justified in putting my scythes into the crop, with entire faith that Aquarius had enough to do for some weeks in refilling his watering-pot. But the old fellow is bent on making up for his culpable laches in those two years of drought, when he left us to our pumps for moisture.

Of other crops I have not much to say. You must not expect much from the "Rousseau." I am always bothered when I try to do anything with old material. I never do anything good unless it keep me awake of nights, and Rousseau let me sleep to my heart's discontent. So there will probably be too many adjectives in the article. Not that I have ever quite reconciled myself to the modern bobtailed style either, which gives one the bare thought, like a naked new-born babe, without a rag of expletive to its back. However, thought is a very good thing when you can get it. . . .

We have had Moses and the Prophet here, as the papers have told you, and our people behaved just as I would have had them. I always thought the Republicans might have kept Johnson if they had applied to him half the soft sodder they are so profuse of to men not a whit wiser — like Thad Stevens, for example. Sumner invited me to dine with the Prophet, but I could not make up my mind to go. — says he looks like a little country attorney. If I had said as many hard things of him as — has, I could not have broken bread with him. I am as willing as most men to allow credit for all a man's good, and I always have for Seward's; but I don't believe in this diplomatic style with a man who is doing public mischief, as if we were so many augurs (instead of bores) and

there were no such thing as Earnest. I confess I *had* a curiosity — but not very teasing. . . .

*To J. T. Fields*<sup>1</sup>

ELMWOOD, June 30, 1867.

My dear Fields, — The gods have made incision in me this morning, and cut out what Dante calls a tumor of the mind, which has been pressing on my brain for a while. Whether they have made me poetical or not I leave to Touchstone and you. Now, you may pitch it into the Atlantic forthwith, or, trusting to luck, save it for the "Almanac."<sup>2</sup> If it go into the latter, I should like to have it opposite the directions for the weather — "About this time expect a drought"; or else with this epigraph, "1st January, Don Pedro Calderon de la Barca, b. 1601." According to one of his Spanish biographers, divine Providence made a special effort on this occasion, and resolved to begin the century and the year with a thumping boy.

Don't you want me to make your astronomical calculations for you? I could get along very well with an old sextant there is in the garret, and will engage for two moons a month if you want 'em, or for an occultation as often as Longfellow needs a subject. As for tides, every purchaser shall have a high one when he wishes

<sup>1</sup> Enclosing his poem, "The Nightingale in the Study."

<sup>2</sup> *The Atlantic Almanac*, to be published in the autumn.

to bathe. Whoever buys two copies shall have fair weather for his haying. How many sewing-machines and grand pianos do you offer as bribes? For a good Chickering, I will engage to take ten copies and read them all — though I must confess I don't generally find an almanac very good reading. Mind and have in all the old pictures of the signs, and the figure of the man (if our modesty will stand it) subject to all the skyey influences. Could n't I do your anecdotes? Those are by far the best part of the "Old Farmer's," and that will be your chief rival. Be sure and let Father Time on your cover have a scythe and hour-glass twice as large as that catch-penny affair fits him out with, for yours will cut twice as wide a swath and take twice as long to read. Shall you have pictures? I'll engage to make you better ones than those in "Sir Launfal" or my fairy-tale for half the price.

You and Mrs. Fields must come down to hear Emerson at Phi Beta. I invite you to dine with the society, and am sorry I can't include Mrs. Fields. An element of picturesqueness would be cheering to us poor devils who have to make speeches.

I am in the midst of haying, with a splendid crop. Give my distant regards to the mountains and my kindest to Mrs. Fields, and believe me

Cordially yours, J. R. L.

P. S. — Mr. Gurney (who likes me) has been dining with me, and I read him my verses (*before* dinner, on my honor), and he pronounced them “exquisite.” What would you have more? It is as well known as any other fact in science that people always tell poets *just* what they think of their productions. You, my dear Fields, always give me a more favorable opinion than the stupid public. It shows your taste, and does you a vast deal of credit. I am going to write another as soon as I can. The possibility of doing this came to me like a flash as I was walking out of town last night after club. I happened to look up at the stars, and my mind was loosened like brooks in spring. I wrote down a few stanzas before I went to bed, so as to be sure of it, and this morning it slid like sand. Here I am, pleased with it, and in a week goodness knows how flat it will seem! But so we are made, and it’s lucky we can think well of ourselves for a minute or two. If our conceit did n’t make us take pride in the chalk eggs we brood so patiently, what would become of us? I expect, by return of mail, your affidavit that my poem is “delicious.” On second thoughts, I believe that was Gurney’s word. It beats “exquisite” hollow, and so I choose it. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, July 8, 1867.

My dear Charles,— The two unenclosed and imaginary sonnets on which you ask my judgment I find much better than those ordinary ones which grossly subject themselves to our senses. They are of the kind that all poets long to write, and which we wish most poets had confined themselves to writing. I don't know which I like best. There is something very tender in the one "To ——" ; but, on the whole, I prefer the other, "To O," which I suppose means annihilation. The thought is so admirably carried out by the expression that one has a feeling of nothingness all through. Perhaps this is not wholly original, for I think it has been attempted in many other sonnets, even in some of Petrarca's, and with good success, but I never knew utter vacancy so well expressed before. Of the merits of your translation I cannot so well judge till I have seen the originals. Even without that help I should conjecturally emend the one "To ——," thus:—

Dear is the mistress that hath never been,  
And sweet the music that lies ever hid  
In Fancy's might-be ; grovelling all we did  
To that great act the inner eye had seen  
Give real being to life's painted scene ;  
Priceless the book whereon we have not bid,  
The gift still hidden 'neath the box's lid,



The action dormant in its germ serene.  
But what are these, or other shapes of dream,  
To poems never writ, that spare our friends,  
And *are* so sweet because they only *seem* ?  
With these the witch Imagination blends  
Her dearest drugs ; still unpossessed they gleam,  
And theirs the only charm that never ends.

Of the one "To O" the version you did n't send me is as exact as need be.

I cannot find anything in Digby's<sup>1</sup> book to your purpose, though I am glad you set me on looking it through again, for I found much entertainment in it as well as solace. There are noble strains in it here and there, especially the address to his soul, at the end of the second treatise. There is something very delightful in books written by men who felt so deeply the importance of their own personality and mix so much of themselves in what they write. Literature was aristocratic then, and man's *ego* was safe from being jostled by the mob till it submitted to be lost therein.

Dante's system follows Thomas Aquinas pretty closely, and I can find what you want, I guess, in the notes to Philalethes' version of the "Divine Comedy." Let me know the precise point, and I will make an abstract of the notes for you. I have been shut up for these ten days by a scald on the leg, or I would have gone to

<sup>1</sup> Sir Kenelm Digby's *Of Bodies and of Man's Soul*.

the College Library. That is closed now till after Commencement. . . .

I have not felt in the mood to do much during my imprisonment. One little poem I have written — “The Nightingale in the Study.” It is about Calderon, and I am inclined to think it pretty ; but that kind of nonsense is always knocked out of me so soon that I may change my mind on reading it over. ’Tis a dialogue between my catbird and me — he calling me out of doors, I giving my better reasons for staying within. Of course my nightingale is Calderon. The plot, you see, is a natural one. I have been reading novels — “Jane Eyre,” among the rest. It was very pleasant to me for its inexperience. It is a girl’s dream of a world not yet known, or only glimpsed from afar. But there is real power in it, and the descriptions of scenery are the best I know, out of Ruskin. I have read over “Roderick Random,” too — an odd contrast — but did not learn anything new from it. I found I knew Smollett well enough before. However, I shall get “Peregrine Pickle” for the sake of Trunnion and Pipes, who are grown very dim to me. Fielding’s coarseness belongs to his time, Smollett’s is of all time. But there are good sketches in him. Then, of course, I have been reading State Trials, as I always do when cast away. There is more nature in them than in all the novels. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, July 9, 1867.

. . . As for me, I am buried alive in the night. Every one else is long ago sleeping, and my only living company is that of a cricket who keeps up his monotonous serenade under my window. How shrill and loud he sounds in the stillness — so breathless I can hear my heart beating, for the sky is making up its mind to rain, and the winds have all gathered in their sky-caverns to plot together. He sings right Ossian — a song of the days that are gone. To the cheerfulest tune in the world he matches the saddest words.

“Sweet are the days while they last!

But autumn is coming,

Chilly and numbing;

Winter is coming too fast!”

I answer : —

“Still there is fuel in plenty

That burns ever clearer.

I will but draw nearer

The same hearth that warmed me at twenty.”

He insists : —

“Yes, there ’ll be some failing flashes;

But winter creeps forward,

Life cants to the norward,

And soon there ’ll be nothing but ashes !”

He is a very melancholy cricket. I think he has been crossed in love, or had something that

disagreed with him for supper, or written some verses that folks did n't like. It has just begun to rain on him, and I'm glad of it. I hope he'll get a thorough ducking, but all the waters in heaven can't wash the nonsense out of a poet, as he is. Already he is beginning to weave the rain into his verse.

“ And the rain is too strong for the fire.  
Poor sparks! it is autumn,  
The chill drops have caught 'em,  
And out fizzle hope and desire ! ”

And so you wrote to me just to find out if an “ Ember-Picture ” was mine? Daughter of Eve! Have you wagered a pair of gloves on it? You have lost, then. *Adsum qui feci, me, in me convertite ferrum!* That is, you turn me to iron of the hardest temper. You, who confess that you drove home a wagon-load of laurel, with —— to sweeten it, can spare never a leaf of it for me? Your hillsides redden with it (blushing under their unmerited bays as poets often might), and you deny me a poor sprig? Well, you say “No!” very prettily and frankly, and that is some comfort. Perhaps it is even refreshing to have written something you don't like.

Save me, ye gods, from ever-prosperous lays!  
A dash of kindly censure seasons praise.  
Fed still with sweets, I lose my taste, I doubt;  
The drop of bitter brings the flavor out.

For all that, I think it rather a pretty picture, or, at any rate, the original in my fancy was. But what would you have? The Muses are women and give us the mitten sometimes. One can't always have what one would. Maybe you'll like my next better. Don't turn off your poor old trouvère because he flats now and then. I shall keep trying till I get the key, and when I do! Hate all my verses and like me. I shall be satisfied. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, *July* 18, 1867.

. . . Emerson's oration<sup>1</sup> was more disjointed than usual, even with *him*. It began nowhere and ended everywhere, and yet, as always with that divine man, it left you feeling that something beautiful had passed that way — something more beautiful than anything else, like the rising and setting of stars. Every possible criticism might have been made on it but one — that it was not noble. There was a tone in it that awakened all elevating associations. He boggled, he lost his place, he had to put on his glasses; but it was as if a creature from some fairer world had lost his way in our fogs, and it was *our* fault, not his. It was chaotic, but it was all such stuff as stars are made of, and you could n't help feeling that, if you waited awhile,

<sup>1</sup> Before the Φ. B. K. Society.

all that was nebulous would be whirled into planets, and would assume the mathematical gravity of system. All through it I felt something in me that cried "Ha, ha, to the sound of the trumpets!" . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, September 25, 1867.

. . . I also have read Littré's book, but was not so much taken with it as you were. It was a little *too* "positivist" for me. He gives more than their due to the Kelts, and less than their due to the Germans, it seems to me. As to the Romans, Fauriel is better. You have read him and will know what I mean. I was a little tired, too, with his repetitions. He reprinted his essays without digesting them, and says the same thing a dozen times over. You will smile, perhaps, but *I* brightened up when I came to his discussions of old French towards the end. *There* he is really somebody, and knows what he is talking about. But as for the Kelts, there is no early French literature of any value in which the Teutonic blood did not supply the *fond*. The history of the language proves it, if nothing else did. Mind, I don't mean that I don't like Littré, for I do thoroughly. But I like Man better than I do any special variety of man — and I think the Keltic variety one of the poorest.

The papers say I am to publish a volume of poems this autumn, and I think I shall. But they seem so poor when I come to look them over! What can I do? They have all been printed, and I must stand up to my "record," as the politicians call it. At least I mean well in the dedication. So you must take them as my mother used to take the little nosegays I brought her from the fields — whiteweed and succory and blue-eyed grass, with here and there a less common mimosa intermixed, and yet with the one merit of being at least home-grown and native in the main.

I begin my annual dissatisfaction of lecturing next Wednesday. I cannot get used to it. All my nightmares are of lecturing. But still I grow stouter. . . .

*To James B. Thayer*

ELMWOOD, *Sunday Evening, October, 1867.*

. . . The review does not change my opinion of Mr. Longfellow's translation — not as the best possible, by any means, but as the best probable. The fault I should find with the criticism is one whereof the author seems to be conscious himself — at least in some measure. It is laid out on too large a scale. His portico is as much too large as that of our Boston Court-House. It seems rather an attempt to show how much the critic knows (and I am heartily

glad to find an American who knows so much) than to demonstrate the defects of the translation. (N. B. My faith in him is a little shaken by what he says of Philalethes, whose notes are excellent, but his version Dutch to the last ditch. Blanc also is a very dull fellow. His "Vocabolario," barring some etymological blunders, is valuable, though to a knower of Dante chiefly as an index, but his comment as void of insight as Bentley's on Milton.) Nobody who is intimate with the original will find any translation of the "Divine Comedy" more refreshing than *cobs*. Has not Dante himself told us that no poetry can be translated? But, after all is said, I think Mr. Longfellow's the best thus far, as being the most accurate. It is to be looked on, I think, as measured prose — like our version of Job, for example, though without that mastery of measure in which our Bible translators are unmatched except by Milton. I mean where they are at their best, as in Job, the songs of Deborah and Barak, the death of Sisera, and some parts of the Psalms. Mr. Longfellow is not a scholar in the German sense of the word — that is to say, he is no pedant; but he certainly *is* a scholar in another and perhaps a higher sense; I mean in range of acquirement and the flavor that comes of it. I agree with the critic that he should not have cited prose translations of Homer and Virgil; but I should



not say with the critic that the Mantuan could be rendered in Scott's measures, nor, I am sure, would Dante have heard it said without indignation. Wordsworth's "Laodamia," with its reminiscences of the sixth book, comes nearer the Maronian march.

But I am heartily glad to find so enthusiastic a student of the poet *chi sovra gli altri come aquila vola*, and have to thank him for giving me the names of two books on Dante which I do not yet possess and with which I shall hasten to supply myself. What he says of the poet as an Italian is true and striking. Yet he *was* a Ghibelline for all that — just as our Democrats are the firmest believers in the One Man power.

I remain

Very cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To J. T. Fields*

ELMWOOD, October 31, 1867.

. . . What a loss we all have in Governor Andrew! So good a man is rare anywhere, so upright a politician especially rare. His jolly courage and good-humored firmness made a combination we shall not see again, I fear, in our day. And let them say what they would of the rhetoric of his speeches; you felt a heart beating all through them, which, after all, is

better than all the rules in Blair and Whately. God comfort his wife! One of these days the memory of her husband will be her best consolation, as it is now her keenest grief. But where shall we find another unselfish public man? . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, *Tuesday Night*, 1868.

. . . The trouble with the "Flying Dutchman" is not in what I left out, but in what I could n't get in. Let us be honest with each other, my dear Lorenzo de' Medici, if we can't be with anybody else. The conception of the verses is good; the verses are bad. I ought not to have taken your check, but I should not have been true to my guild else. As for putting back what was in the first copy — the said first copy went up my chimney Sunday afternoon, as airy and sparkling a poem as I meant it to be when it came first into my head. If I *could* recover it with the fervor of the flame and the grace of the smoke still in it! That's the kind of thing we dream of — the copy you have is the kind of thing we *do*. The fact is, it did not begin itself right, and I was thenceforth the prisoner of the lilt to whose tune my brain had begun to — I won't say dance, but — march to the galleys. But there is a month yet. Let me forget it, and perhaps I can do it again better. If not, I have the germ of a little prose essay in my

head, which I think will more than take its place if all goes well.

One third of the new volume is already in type! I can't make out whether the author is a poet (though he would like to be); but I have got so far as to think humbly that he is not altogether an ass, at any rate — which is reasonably consoling, as this world goes. I think, instead of a preface (which we agree about), I might put a note in brackets on the back of the dedicatory page, saying in a few words what I wish.

My heart was almost broken yesterday by seeing nailed to *my* willow a board with these words on it, "These trees for sale." The wretch is going to peddle them for firewood! If I had the money, I would buy the piece of ground they stand on to save them — the dear friends of a lifetime. They would be a loss to the town. But what can one do? They belong to a man who values them by the cord. I wish Fenn had sketched them at least. One of them I hope will stand a few years yet in my poem — but he might just as well have outlasted me and my works, making his own green ode every summer.

Well, this is a free country! Hurrah for Banks and Butler! . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, March 5 (O. S., February 22), 1868.

My dear Fields, — You know that there is a very considerable party in the world, headed by the Pope — that pagan full of pride — who would cure all our ills by simply putting the world back, and this feat they would accomplish by putting back the hands of the clock. When I got home last night and reflected on the indecency of which I had been guilty in not answering your note, I was struck with the simplicity of this plan, and especially with its adaptation to a difficulty like that in which I found myself. I at first thought of lengthening the pendulum of my clock and waiting patiently till it should have *lost time* enough to carry me back to where I wished to be. But, on mature reflection, I found a swifter solution of my problem. I remembered that the Russians, a highly respectable and friendly nation, still adhered to the Old Style in their computation of time, thus always having twelve more days in their pockets than those spendthrift people who had allowed themselves to be cheated by the Pope out of that precious advantage. By our purchase of Alaska, I think, we are entitled to share in this benefit of calendar. On this computation, I have not yet received, and shall not [receive] for a couple of days yet, the note you

were so kind as to be going to write me day after to-morrow, 24th Feb., O. S. Provided I ever get it (for you may change your mind), I shall be very happy to come; but I will never join in a conspiracy to cheat Longfellow out of near a fortnight of his days — a very serious matter at sixty-one. If you should be going to send me also some tickets for Dickens's readings of the 24th, 25th, 26th, and 28th Feb., as you kindly hint, I shall be extremely obliged to you. There can be no greater privilege than to hear a man of genius interpret his own creations. And a very delightful man of genius he is — simple, sweet, and natural — and so used to being a lion that he might lie down with Charles Lamb without scaring him. If Britannia could always have ruled her waves as quietly as he does, there would have been a kindlier feeling between us and her — I mean her and us, saving her presence.

I concluded a treaty with Mrs. Fields on Saturday, by the terms of which you are to come and eat roast pig with us so soon as the fitting time for the feast of those innocents shall arrive, which will be in about three weeks. I have a lovely brood, whose tails curl with eagerness for martyrdom, and who will be as tender as young missionaries. . . .

*To the Same**March, 1868.*

Fragment of a Pindarique Ode in the manner of the late divine  
Mr. Abraham Cowley:

Come, oh, my Fields,  
Leaving the city (with ill authors vext)  
~~For~~ *At half past two on Thursday next,*  
Come, try what sweets the Country yields;  
Come and eat Pigge!  
For, such the swelling nature  
Of that delicious creature,  
That ere another week he'll be too bigge.  
Come, and bring Her with you  
By whose fair presence graced  
An Irish Stew,  
Nay, a meer emptie board, were an imperial feast.

Here I am interrupted — but you shall have  
the rest by instalments. But come on Thurs-  
day at ½ past 2, with Mrs. Fields.

Believe me ever yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To T. W. Parsons**ELMWOOD, July 1, 1868.*

My dear Parsons, — I seem ungrateful, but  
when your letter came I was grubbing away at  
an article for the "North American," and for-  
got my answer, though not your friendship.  
Whether praise be agreeable or not depends,  
you know, on where it comes from, and yours

is always precious to me. The first bay-leaf I ever got that I valued was the poem you wrote to me ever so long ago.

The poem of mine which you liked had at least so much right to it that it was the natural expression of a real feeling. Something more than half of it was written more than twenty years ago, on the death of our eldest daughter; but when I came to complete it that other death, which broke my life in two, *would* come in against my will, so that you were right in your surmise. I was very glad you liked it, and your letter touched me deeply, as you may well conceive.

I guess your sister is half right in her criticisms on my "Idyl;" but if we poor poets were tied down to saying only just what was necessary on a subject (so garrulous as reverie is apt to be), what would become of us? Tell her there is no absolute *necessity* for people writing accounts of days in the country — they don't affect the price of stocks — though when they are as lively as hers I don't wish them shorter.

I hope you are at work upon your Dante, and that you will give us the "Purgatorio" before long. Pray let us see you here the next time you are at Cambridge.

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To H. W. Longfellow*

ELMWOOD, July 23, 1868.

My dear Longfellow, — . . . Pleasure afterwards: Of course the Club follow your triumphal progress in England with pride and sympathy. They share the triumph, and are willing not to partake the gale, which, I should think, must endanger your hat now and then. Still, it must be delightful on the whole, and I am glad you went over to gather your laurels. Your children must be proud, if you are not. Let me send you a single leaf. Yesterday I was at Rogers's buying a pair of shoes. After speaking of you in a way that warmed my heart to him, he went on: "But I have a feeling of deep personal obligation to Mr. Longfellow. When I was in a state of deep depression, such as I never experienced before or since, when everything looked dark and no chance of light, my daughter sat down by my bedside and read 'Evangeline' to me, then just published. That gave me my first comfort, and sent light into my soul." That is almost literally what he said, and I confess I thought it a tribute worth more than most.

We have been going through our usual Commencement tediums during the hottest weather ever known. My thermometer stood at 99°. And now we are in our fourth week of drought.



The town is very empty to me, with you and the Nortons gone. Almost the only houses I ever entered are closed and dark. Of course there is no news. I am drudging away as usual, and contrive to make my bricks hold together now and then without straw. But I wish I were on that side.

“I see you walking in an air of glory  
Whose light doth trample on my days.”

*We*, meanwhile, are to go through the agonies of a presidential election. Well, we are alive, at any rate.

With kindest remembrances to all the children and Appleton,

I am always affectionately,  
J. R. L.

*To W. D. Howells*

ELMWOOD, *July 27, 1868.*

. . . I have not yet had time to read *through* Mr. Piatt's volume, but I have already found so much to like in it that I think I can write a notice likely to please, if not to serve, him. His poems are *so much* better than the common run of our versifying. The sentiment of them seems to me very tender of tone, though sometimes the expression is not quite up to the level of the sentiment, and often fails for want of clearness. *Could n't* you print one of his pieces?

You must sometimes have admitted worse. However, you are the best judge.

I read your article on Curtis <sup>1</sup> with great pleasure. It is a most *delicate* piece of writing — as, indeed, I find all that you do. This seemed to me remarkable for its nice turns, even for you. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

September 4, 1868.

. . . I have been making several little excursions this vacation. To Concord, J. H. and I went to visit Judge Hoar, where we spent a couple of nights. To Newburyport, to see Charles Storey, and stayed also two nights. Thence we drove to Amesbury and called on Whittier, who piloted us to a fine bluff over the Merrimac, whence there was a lovely view. After that I went down to Shelter Island, where I stayed nearly a week with the Lanes, and had a very pleasant time sailing, fishing, and lazing about. I should like to lie under a tree for a year, with no other industry than to watch the dapples of sunlight on the grass. . . .

*To J. T. Fields*

ELMWOOD, September 7, 1868.

My dear Fields, — . . . Pray who wrote the article on Hawthorne in the last "Atlantic"?

<sup>1</sup> In the *North American Review*.

A woman, I think.<sup>1</sup> I found it very interesting, and, on the whole, the most adequate thing about Hawthorne I have seen, though a little clumsy here and there. But it was *good*, and I love to see him praised as he deserves. I don't think people have any kind of true notion yet what a master he was, God rest his soul! Shakespeare, I am sure, was glad to see him on the other side.

I wish I could do what you ask for the "Atlantic." Your offer is generous, but what could I do? My brain is a disenchanted Fortunatus purse, which I turn upside down and shake in vain. I am getting fat and dull. I thank you all the same, but I find fairy-money no longer. Sometimes I think I *might*, but who knows? We are all so conceited! . . .

<sup>1</sup> The article was by Miss Elizabeth P. Peabody, the sister-in-law of Hawthorne.

## VI

1868-1872

*Life at Elmwood.* — “*Under the Willows and Other Poems.*” — “*My Study Windows.*” — “*Among My Books,*” *First Series.* — “*The Cathedral.*” — *Visit from Thomas Hughes.*

*Letters to C. E. Norton, R. W. Emerson, E. L. Godkin, Leslie Stephen, J. B. Thayer, W. D. Howells, J. T. Fields, Miss Norton, Miss Mabel Lowell, Miss Cabot, T. B. Aldrich, Thomas Hughes, Charles Nordhoff, R. S. Chilton, F. H. Underwood.*

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, October 7, 1868.

. . . “The summer is past, the harvest is ended,” and I have not yet written to you! Well, I was resolved I would not write till the printers had in their hands all the copy of my new volume of old poems. And that has taken longer than I expected. I have been Marthaized by many small troubles. But last night I fairly ended my work. . . . I had decided to put the “June Idyl” in the forefront and call it “A June Idyl, and Other Poems.” But Fields told me that Whittier’s new volume was to be called

“A Summer Idyl” — so I was blocked there. Then I took “Appledore,” merely because it was a pretty name, though I did not wish to put that in the van. So it was all settled for the second time. Then I was suddenly moved to finish my “Voyage to Vinland,” part of which, you remember, was written eighteen years ago. I meant to have made it much longer, but maybe it is better as it is. I clapt a beginning upon it, patched it in the middle, and then got to what had always been my favorite part of the plan. This was to be a prophecy by Gudrida, a woman who went with them, of the future America. I have written in an unrhymed alliterated measure, in very short verse and stanzas of five lines each. It does not aim at following the law of the Icelandic alliterated stave, but hints at it and also at the *asonante*, without being properly either. But it runs well and is melodious, and we think it pretty good here, as does also Howells. Well, after that, of course, I was all for alliteration, and, as I liked the poem, thought no title so good as “The Voyage to Vinland, and Other Poems.” But Fields would not hear of it, and proposed that I should rechristen the Idyl “Elmwood,” and name the book after that. But the more I thought of it the less I liked it. It was throwing my sanctuary open to the public and making a show-house of my hermitage. It was

indecent. So I fumed and worried. I was *riled*. Then it occurred to me that I had taken the name of "June Idyl" as a *pis-aller*, because in my haste I could think of nothing else. Why not name it over? So I hit upon "Under the Willows," and that it is to be. . . . But it is awfully depressing work. They call back so many moods, and they are so bad. I think, though, there is a suggestion of something good in them at least, and they are not silly. But how much the public will stand! I sometimes wonder they don't drive all us authors into a corner and make a *battue* of the whole concern at once. . . .

To R. W. Emerson

ELMWOOD, October 14, 1868.

My dear Sir, — If you had known what a poem your two tickets contained for me, how much they recalled, how many vanished faces of thirty years ago, how much gratitude for all you have been and are to us younger men (a debt I always love to acknowledge, though I can never repay it), you would not have dreamed of my not being an eager hearer during the whole course. Even were I not sure (as I always am with you) of having what is best in me heightened and strengthened, I should go out of loyalty to what has been one of the great privileges of my life. I, for one,

"Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime,"

and you may be sure of one pair of ears in which the voice is always musical and magisterial too. . . .

I am gratefully and affectionately

Your liegeman,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, November 20, 1868.

. . . The cause you advocate in the "Nation" is not specially American — it is that of honest men everywhere, and acknowledges no limits of nationality. And let me say for your comfort, that while I have heard the *criticism* of the "Nation" objected to as ill-natured (though I naturally don't think it so), I have never heard its political writing spoken of but with praise. The other day at a dinner-table some of its criticisms were assailed, and I said that I might be suspected of partiality if I defended them (though I *think* I am not [open to the charge]), but that "I deliberately thought that its discussions of politics had done more good and influenced opinion more than any other agency, or all others combined, in the country." This, so far as I could judge, was unanimously assented to. At any rate, one of my antagonists agreed with me entirely, and no one else dissented. The criticisms in the "Nation" often strike me as admirable. I sometimes dissent, but I am

getting old and good-natured, and know, moreover, how hard it is to write well, to come even anywhere near one's own standard of good writing. . . .

. . . For my own part I am not only thankful for the "Nation," but continually wonder how you are able to make so excellent a paper with your material. I have been an editor and know how hard it is. . . .

I had forgotten the financial question. I insist on my own view of it. I shall write from time to time till I think we are square. What Fields pays me, I doubt if anybody else would. He has always been truly generous in his dealings with me. If you feel any scruples, you can make matters even by sending the "Nation" for a year to John B. Minor, Professor in the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Accident has lately put me in correspondence with him and given me a strong feeling of respect for his character. He lost everything by the war, but was and is a Union man, though he went with his State. I have often wished the "Nation" might have some circulation at the South, and here is a good chance to get at *one* sensible man there at any rate. I don't wish him to know where it comes from. Perhaps it would be better to send him a number now and then at first, till he got used to it, omitting numbers that might startle his natural prejudices in any way. I think



it would do good. I confess to a strong sympathy with men who sacrificed everything even to a bad cause which they could see only the good side of; and, now the war is over, I see no way to heal the old wounds but by frankly admitting this and acting upon it. We can never reconstruct the South except through its own leading men, nor ever hope to have them on our side till we make it for their interest and compatible with their honor to be so. At this moment in Virginia, the oath required by the new Constitution makes it impossible to get a decent magistrate. . . .

*To Leslie Stephen*

ELMWOOD, *Thanksgiving Day*, 1868.

My dear Stephen, — I hope that while I am writing this, with my pipe in my mouth, you and Mrs. Stephen are not suffering those agonies that come from being rocked in the cradle of the deep. You are wallowing along through this dreary rain towards drearier Halifax, and I wish instead you were going to eat turkey with us. I am truly glad to hear that Mrs. Stephen is so much better, and that she could find something to like among us. I don't wonder that she thought America dull, if she judged it by Elmwood. It *was* dull, but I could n't help it, for I am as stupid as a public dinner. A host should have nothing on his mind.

Had I known where, I should have sent you my book. You will get it before long in London, and may like it as little as you please, if you will keep on liking *me*.

Mabel was delighted with her gift from England, and has written to say so. She was especially pleased to get a package from London addressed to herself and not to my care. I immediately seized the last volume (which I had not read) and went through it before I "retired," as Mrs. Stowe would say. I was amazingly taken with it, and am not ashamed to confess that I blubbered over "Beauty and the Beast," and gulped my heart down several times in "Little Red Riding-hood." I am no great judge, but the book struck me as simply delightful, which, after all, is something of a literary merit. As for Mabel, her conceit is intolerable. The books stand on her shelves, and when her young friends come to see her she turns the conversation adroitly upon Miss Thackeray, and then exhibits her prize. I gave her *my* book, and she has not read it yet. At so low an ebb is taste in a democracy! I begin to suspect an immoral tendency in "The Story of Elizabeth."

I was very much amused with your picture of those wretched British swells in Washington. If it is dull during the recess, what must it be when Congress gathers into one focus the united rays of boredom from every corner of the

country? I am thankful that we can revenge ourselves on part of the British race for the wrongs of the Alabama. You gave us the heroic Semmes, and we let loose Sumner upon your embassy. I was not sorry you should say a kind word for poor old Johnson. I have never thought so ill of him as becomes an orthodox Republican. The worst of him was that he meant well. As for Chase, he is a weak man with an imposing presence — a most unhappy combination, of which the world has not wanted examples from Saul and Pompey down. Such men as infallibly make mischief as they defraud expectation. If you write about American politics, remember that Grant has always chosen able lieutenants. My own opinion is (I give it for what it is worth), that the extreme Republicans will be wofully disappointed in Grant. At any rate, if he should throw away his opportunity to be an independent President, he is not the man I take him to be. No man ever had a better chance to be a great magistrate than he. If he should n't prove to be one — well, a democracy can bear a great deal. . . .

It is raining drearily to-day, but my sister and a nephew and niece and Rowse are to keep festival with me, and I shall be quite patriarchal. It is by such fetches that I supply the want of grandchildren. However, I have grandnephews, and so am a kind of grandfather by brevet.

1870, my dear boy, is a far cry, but I shall look forward to it as the bringer of good gifts, if it bring you back to me. You know the way to my door and my heart, and won't stupidly go to the Tremont House again. Perhaps I shall keep a coach by that time, who knows? Give our kindest regards to Mrs. Stephen, and be sure that, whatever happens, it will never come to pass that I am not heartily and affectionately

Yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To James B. Thayer*

ELMWOOD, December 8, 1868.

My dear Sir, — I have never meddled with any criticism of what I write, nor am I very sensitive about it, having long ago made up my mind that whatever was good would make its own way at last. But how could I be other than pleased with your "notice" of my book in the "Daily Advertiser"? It was sympathetic, and what more could one ask? A criticism *meant* to be friendly would be resented by a man of self-respect as an alms. I enclose you one of a kind I am used to,<sup>1</sup> and leave you to guess whether

<sup>1</sup> This was the notice enclosed: *Under the Willows, and Other Poems*. By James Russell Lowell, pp. viii., 286. Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co.

"An introductory note to this work informs us that no collection of Mr. Lowell's poems has been made since 1848.

I ought not to be thankful for such as yours. I was pleased that you should remember some old verses of mine, which I also think better of than I commonly do of what I have written — that about the bobolink, for example.

Perhaps you thought I should n't like what you said about Mr. Emerson? Not a bit of it! I am and always shall be grateful for what I owe him, and glad to acknowledge it on all occasions. As for originality, I have read too much not to know that it is never absolute, and that it will always take care of itself. When a man begins to be touchy about it, he has already lost what little he ever had. One might as well take out a patent for the cut of his jib, when those who remember the family know perfectly well that his grandfather invented it for him.

I don't agree with you about "weariless." In language one should be nice but not difficult. In poetry, especially, something must be "pardoned to the spirit of liberty." I thought of the objection when I was correcting my proofs, and let the word pass deliberately. Shakespeare has "viewless" and "woundless;" "tireless" is not without authority ('spite of

All but two of the shortest which appear here have been printed before, either in whole or part, the greater number having been published more than fifteen years ago. The author's taste and scholarship will find attentive readers for all he writes, whether prose or poetry."

the *double entente*) ; and I remember “ soundless sea ” somewhere or other. I think the form is utterly indefensible, but good nevertheless.

I don't know how to answer your queries about my “ Ode.” I *guess* I am right, for it was matter of pure instinct—except the strophe you quote, which I added for balance both of measure and thought. I am not sure if I understand what you say about the tenth strophe. You will observe that it leads naturally to the eleventh, and that I there justify a certain narrowness in it as an expression of the popular feeling as well as my own. I confess I have never got over the feeling of wrath with which (just after the death of my nephew Willie) I read in an English paper that nothing was to be hoped of an army officered by tailors' apprentices and butcher-boys. The poem was written with a vehement speed, which I thought I had lost in the skirts of my professor's gown. Till within two days of the celebration I was hopelessly dumb, and then it all came with a rush, literally making me lean (*mi fece magro*), and so nervous that I was weeks in getting over it. I was longer in getting the new (eleventh) strophe to my mind than in writing the rest of the poem. In *that* I hardly changed a word, and it was so undeliberate that I did not find out till after it was printed that some of the verses lacked corresponding rhymes. All

the "War Poems" were improvisations, as it were. My blood was up, and you would hardly believe me if I were to tell how few hours intervened between conception and completion, even in so long a one as "Mason and Slidell." So I have a kind of faith that the "Ode" is right because it was *there*, I hardly knew how. I doubt you are right in wishing it more historical. But then I could not have written it. I had put the ethical and political view so often in prose that I was weary of it. The motives of the war? I had impatiently argued them again and again — but for an ode they must be in the blood and not the memory. One of my great defects (I have always been conscious of it) is an impatience of mind which makes me contemptuously indifferent about arguing matters that have once become convictions.

It bothers me sometimes in writing verses. The germ of a poem (the *idée mère*) is always delightful to me, but I have no pleasure in working it up. I carry them in my head sometimes for years before they insist on being written. You will find some verses of mine in the next "Atlantic,"<sup>1</sup> the conception of which tickles me — but half spoiled (and in verse half is more than whole) in the writing. But what can a poor devil do who must gather a stick

<sup>1</sup> "The Flying Dutchman."

here and another there to keep the domestic pot a-boiling? My eggs take long in hatching, because I need to brood a good while — and if one is called away from the nest long enough to let it grow cold?

And the “Nooning.” Sure enough, where is it? The “June Idyl” (written in ’51 or ’52) is a part of what I had written as the induction to it. The description of spring in one of the “Biglow Papers” is another fragment of the same, tagged with rhyme for the nonce. So is a passage in “Mason and Slidell,” beginning “Oh, strange new world.” The “Voyage to Vinland,” the “Pictures from Appledore,” and “Fitz-Adam’s Story” were written for the “Nooning,” as originally planned. So, you see, I had made some progress. Perhaps it will come by and by — not in the shape I meant at first, for something broke my life in two, and I cannot piece it together again. Besides, the Muse asks *all* of a man, and for many years I have been unable to give myself up as I would. You will have noticed that many of the poems in my book are moody — perhaps unhealthy (I hope you may never have reason to like “After the Burial” better than you do), and I was mainly induced to print them that I might get rid of them by shutting them between two covers. Perhaps I am not very clear, but I know what I mean.



I meant to have written you a note, but, enticed by your friendly warmth, I have expatiated into a letter. Forgive me, and set it down to your own friendly warmth. It will be a warning to you in future. Meanwhile, it is some consolation that I am cheating dear Gurney, for I ought to be doing the politics of the next "North American Review."

I remain very cordially yours,  
J. R. LOWELL.

P. S. Since this was written (for it was written last Sunday, and I have rewritten it to get rid of some too *expansive* passages) Motley has given me the beginning of one of my poems, which I had lost. I thought you might like to have it, so I copy it on the next leaf, that you may paste it in before the poem called "A Mood," where it belongs. Hamilton Wild wrote it down for Motley from memory, and as it has stuck in his head so many years I think it must have some good in it. I rather like it myself. I found the poem as it stands in an old note-book. I knew that it had been printed (part of it), and that it did not begin rightly—but could not remember where to look for it.

I go to the ridge in the forest  
Which I haunted in days gone by;  
But thou, O Memory, pourest  
No magical drop in mine eye,

Nor the gleam of the secret restorest  
That has faded from woodland and sky.  
A presence more sad and sober  
Invests the rock and the tree;  
And the aureole of October  
Lights the maples, but darkens me.

*To J. T. Fields*

ELMWOOD, December 20, 1868.

My dear Fields, — . . . I read your advertisement in the "Nation," and discovered with some surprise what a remarkable person I was. It is lucky for Dante and them fellers that they got their chance so early. I hope I shall still be able to meet my friends on an easy footing. I trust I can unbend without too painful an air of condescension. But make the most of me, my dear Fields, while you have me. I begin to fear an untimely death. Such rare apparitions are apt to vanish as unexpectedly as they come. There is no life-insurance for these immortals. They have their length of days on t'other side. For my part I don't understand how Bryant holds out so long. Yet it was pleasant to see him renewing his youth like the eagles, in that fine poem about the trees. He deserves to have a tree planted over his grave, which I would n't say of many men. A cord of wood should be a better monument for most. There was a very high air about those verses, a tone of the best poetic society, that was very delightful. Tell

Mrs. Fields that I think they justify his portrait.

Your January "Atlantic" was excellent. O. W. H. never wrote more to my mind, so genial, so playfully tender. And Howells. Barring a turn of phrase here and there, I think that as good a thing as you ever printed.<sup>1</sup> It had the uncommon merit of being interesting. That boy will know how to write if he goes on, and then we old fellows will have to look about us. His notice (I suppose it was his) of Longfellow's book was a masterpiece of delicate handling. How fair it was, and yet what a kindly discretion in turning all good points to the light! Give my love to him, and tell him I miss him much. Also, in noticing my book, to forget his friendship, and deal honestly with me like a man.

With kind regards to Mrs. Fields and a merry Xmas to both of you (you have made more than one of mine merrier before now),

Yours ever,

J. R. L.

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, *New Year*, 1869.

My dear Godkin, — Thinking you might not otherwise see it, I enclose you a paragraph from an harangue of Miss Dickinson's at the

<sup>1</sup> A paper entitled "Gnadenhütten."

Boston Music Hall last night — 31st December. I don't send it because you will care for what she says about the "Nation" — which is weak enough — but because it will give you a chance to say a timely word on an important subject. This theory of settling things by what anybody may choose to consider "humanity," instead of trying to find out how they may be settled by knowledge, is a fallacy too common in this country. When one recollects that the Scythians (whoever they were) used to eat their grandfathers out of humanity, one gets a little shy of trusting himself to it altogether, especially as one grows older. It is awful to contemplate — and yet profoundly instructive — that, when we talk of the "moral nature of man," we mean the disposition that has been bred in him by habit — that is, by respect for the opinion of others become a habit: *ἥθος*, *mores*, *mœurs*, *costumbres*, *costumi*, *sitte* (connected, I suppose, with the *suet* in *suetus*) — it is so in all tongues. One must swallow the truth, though it makes one's eyes water. Nor does this hinder one from believing in the higher Reason, as I for one firmly do. We have an instinct to prefer the good, other things being equal, and in exact proportion to our culture we know better what *is* good, and prefer it more habitually.

For your guidance, I add that there were

some very good points in the lecture — better, indeed, than I expected. But it is very droll to me that Miss Dickinson should n't see that her "humanity" style of setting things right (by instinct, namely) is the very shillelah method she condemns so savagely in the Irish. Is it not?

The "Nation" continues to be a great comfort to me. I agree so entirely with most of its opinions that I begin to have no small conceit of my own wisdom. You have made yourself a Power (with a big p), my dear Fellow, and have done it honestly by honest work, courage, and impartiality. . . .

Yours always,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, January 8, 1869.

My dear Godkin, — Don't think I have gone mad that I so pepper you with letters — I have a reason, as you will see presently. But in the first place let me thank you for the article on Miss Dickinson, which was just what I wanted and expected, for (excuse me) you preach the best lay-sermons I know of. I know it is a weakness and all that, but I was born with an impulse to tell people when I like them and what they do, and I look upon you as a great public benefactor. I sit under your preaching

every week with indescribable satisfaction, and know just how young women feel towards their parson — but let Mrs. Godkin take courage, I can't marry you! . . .

My interest in the "Nation" is one of gratitude, and has nothing to do with my friendship for you. I am sure, from what I hear said against you, that you are doing great good and that you are respected. I may be wrong, but I sincerely believe you have raised the tone of the American press.

I don't want to pay for the "Nation" myself. I take a certain satisfaction in the large F. on the address of my copy. It is the only thing for which I was ever deadheaded. But I wish to do something in return. So I enclose my check for \$25, and wish you to send the paper to five places where it will do most good to others and to itself. Find out five College reading-rooms, and send it to them for a year. Those who read it will want to keep on reading it. I can think of no wiser plan. Send one to the University of Virginia and one to the College of South Carolina. One, perhaps, would do good if sent to Paul H. Hayne, Augusta, Georgia. He was a rebel colonel, I believe, but is in a good frame of mind, if I may judge from what he has written to me. . . .

*To W. D. Howells*

ELMWOOD, Under the Rain, 1869.

My dear Boy, — You know very well that I would rather have you fond of me than write the best essay that ever Montaigne conceived as he paced to and fro in that bleak book-room of his. But for all that, I am grateful for what you say, since a gray beard brings self-distrust — at least in my case, who never had any great confidence in anything but Truth.

But what I write this for is only to say that to be sure I knew who the “young Vermont sculptor” was,<sup>1</sup> and pleased myself with alluding to him for your sake; for when my heart is warm towards any one I like all about him, and this is why I am so bad (or so good) a critic, just as you choose to take it. If women only knew how much woman there is in me, they would forgive all my heresies on the woman question — I mean, they would if they were not women.

But then I am a good critic about one thing, and I see how you have mixed *me* and my essay. Why, I was thinking only this morning that if I could have you to lecture to I could discourse with great good-luck, for you always bring me a reinforcement of spirits.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Larkin G. Mead, the brother-in-law of Mr. Howells.

Well, whatever happens, you can't be sorry that I thought so much of you as I do.

With kindest regards to Mrs. Howells,  
Always affectionately yours, J. R. L.

*To J. T. Fields*

ELMWOOD, March 23, 1869.

My dear Fields, — I don't see why the New York poets should have all the sonnets to themselves, nor why we should n't be "littery" now and then as well as they. With the help of Walker's "Rhyming Dictionary" and Lemprière, I have hammered out fourteen lines to you, which I honestly think are as much like Shakespeare's sonnets as some others I have seen. Your name does not consent so kindly to an invocation as Stoddard or Taylor or Boker or Richard or Bayard, which, albeit trochees, may well displace an iambus in the first foot.

"Richard, thy verse that like molasses runs,"

launches your sonnet without a hitch. I tried at first to evade the difficulty by beginning boldly,

James T., the year, in its revolving round,  
Hath brought once more the tributary pig —

but it wants that classical turn which lends grace to your true sonnets as shaped by the great masters in this kind of writing. So I have hit on another expedient, which I think will serve the turn. As I find some of my critics blame me



as too scholarly and obscure because I use such words as microcosm — which send even *well-read* men to their dictionaries — I have added a few notes: —

Poseidon <sup>1</sup> Fields, who dost the <sup>2</sup> “Atlantic” <sup>3</sup> sway,  
 Making it swell, or flattening at thy will!  
 O glaucous <sup>4</sup> one, be thou propitious still  
 To me, a minnum <sup>5</sup> dandled on thy spray! <sup>6</sup>  
 Eftsoons <sup>7</sup> a milk-white porkerlet <sup>8</sup> we slay.  
 No sweeter e’er repaid Eumæus’ <sup>9</sup> skill;  
 A blameless Lamb <sup>10</sup> thereon might feed his fill,

<sup>1</sup> “Poseidon,” a fabulous deity, called by the Latins Neptuneus; here applied to Fields as presiding over the issues of the *Atlantic*.

<sup>2</sup> “The Atlantic,” to be read “th’ Atlantic,” in order to avoid the *hiatus* or gap where two vowels come together. Authority for this will be found in Milton and other poets.

<sup>3</sup> “*Atlantic*,” a well-known literary magazine.

<sup>4</sup> “Glaucous,” between blue and green, an epithet of Poseidon, and an editor who shows greenness is sure to look blue in consequence.

<sup>5</sup> “Minnum,” vulgo pro *minnow*, utpote species *minima piscium*.

<sup>6</sup> “Dandled on thy spray.” — A striking figure. Horace has *piscium et summa genus haesit ulmo*, but the poverty of the Latin did not allow this sport of fancy with the double meaning of the word *spray*.

<sup>7</sup> “Eftsoons.” — This word (I *think*) may be found in Spenser. It means soon after, i. e., before long.

<sup>8</sup> “Porkerlet,” a pretty French diminutive, as in *roitelet*.

<sup>9</sup> “Eumæus,” the swineherd of Ulysses, a character in Homer.

<sup>10</sup> “Lamb,” a well-known literary character of the seven-

Deeming he cropped the new-sprung herb <sup>1</sup> of May.  
 Our board do thou and Amphitrite <sup>2</sup> grace;  
 Archbishop <sup>3</sup> of our literary sea,  
 Lay by thy trident-crozier for a space,  
 And try our forks; or, earless <sup>4</sup> to our plea,  
 Let this appease thee and the frown displace:  
 The Gurneys come and John <sup>5</sup> — then answer, *Oui* ! <sup>6</sup>

There! I think I have made that clear enough except in one particular, namely, its meaning. I don't admit that a sonnet needs anything so vulgar — but this one means that I want you and Mrs. Fields to eat a tithe-pig ('t is an offering of William's) with us in about ten days from

teenth century, chiefly remembered for having burnt his house to roast a favorite pig. He invented mint-sauce.

<sup>1</sup> "Herb" — grass. — Borrow a Bible, and you will find the word thus used in that once popular work.

<sup>2</sup> "Amphitrite," the beautiful spouse of Poseidon.

<sup>3</sup> "Archbishop." — This is the Elizabethan style. (N. B., the play is upon *sea* and *see*.) This term is beautifully, may I not say piously, appropriate, since the Grecian gods have all been replaced by Christian saints, and St. Anthony of Padua converted the finny nomads of the deep. He found a ready *herring*, I suppose.

<sup>4</sup> "Earless." — This is not to be taken literally, as in the case of Defoe, or as Hotspur misinterprets Glendower's "bootless." It means simply *deaf*.

<sup>5</sup> "John." — It is hardly necessary to say that there is but one John — to wit, J. Holmes, Esq., of Holmes Place.

<sup>6</sup> "*Oui*," a neat transition to the French tongue, conveying at once a compliment to the learning of the person addressed and an allusion to his editorial position. Editors and kings always say *We*.

now. I will fix the day as soon as I find out when the fairy creature will be ripe.

I have corrected nearly all of one volume, and dreary work it is. I know nothing more depressing than to look one's old poems in the face. If Rousseau's brats had come back upon his hands from the *Enfans Trouvés*, he would have felt just as I do.

Always yours,

J. R. L.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, April 1, 1869.

My dear Fields, — The late Governor Gore, of pious memory, having issued his proclamation for a fast, incontinently thereafter sent out invitations for a dinner upon the same day, and thereby lost as much credit for piety as he gained praise for hospitality. As a politician, the balance was clearly against him in a community whose belief in immortality was not based upon material nutriment. But as a man, it may be suspected that he lost nothing except in the opinion of those who were not invited. If Governor Claflin (if I am right in the name of our present illustrious chief magistrate) had known that my pig would have been exactly ripe on the 8th day of April, and that twenty-four hours (not to speak of forty-eight) would convert him into vulgar pork, he would have

doubtless chosen another occasion for proving his devotion to the principles of our Puritan forefathers. That sense of culinary propriety which led Moses to forbid the seething of a kid in its mother's milk would have induced *him* to spare my suckling the vulgarization of a single day longer amid the multitudinous temptations of the sty. Fancy that object of our tender solicitude exposed, like Eve, to the solicitation of an apple, still worse of some obscener vegetable! I will not even suggest a turnip, for that were too horrible. Even an unbeliever in the literal inspiration of Scripture would reject such an hypothesis with disgust. Deeply revolving these things, and also the fact that Gurney can't come either on Wednesday or Friday, I must fix on Thursday next as the day of consummation.

Those who have read the excellent Claflin's proclamation (I have not) can take their measures accordingly. They can deny themselves the second helping. They can leave a bit of untasted *cracklin* on their plates, or, defying the wrath of an offended deity with a *tant de bruit pour une omelette*, they can eat their fill. At any rate, Thursday the 8th is the day — if I have a house over my head.

I say this because we have been April-fooled with an alarm of fire to-day. The house was thick with smoke to the coughing-point, and I

sent for a carpenter to rip up here and there. We were undoubtedly afire, but, thank God, we went out. It was not pleasant while it lasted, but Vulcan showed a consideration I can't thank him too much for in coming by daylight. But fancy seeing smoke come up through the chinks of your garret-floor in a house like this ! Yet this we saw. I confess I expected to spend the night at my sister's in Roxbury, and even now I am almost afraid to go to bed lest it may begin again. I had a vision of our two chimneys standing like the ruins of Persepolis.

Therefore, if we don't burn down, we shall expect you on Thursday ; and if we *do*, why, then we will invite ourselves to dine with you.

Yours always,

J. R. L.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, April 5, 1869.

My dear Fields, — If it had been as hard for Eve to eat her apple as for me to get my pig eaten, we should all be at this moment enjoying an income of a million a minute and our expenses paid — with roast pig growing on every bush. The Greeks thought a great man struggling with the storms of fate the sublimest spectacle offered to mortal eyes ; but if *Œdipus* begging a meal's meat be an awful sight, is there not even something more pathetic in the case of him who strives in vain to give away a dinner ?

The pleasure of eating roast pig on Fast Day, in such company as I reckoned on, could only have been increased by adding a stray Jew to our commensals. But, alas,

“What is this life? What asken man to have?”

Our cook is gone! And though Lenore's mother said many sensible things to console her for a far lighter loss — that of a dragoon — yet the answer was conclusive,

“O Mutter, Mutter, *hin ist hin!*”

If *hin* isn't *hin*, what is? In short, we must postpone our dinner. That pig, like Hawthorne's youth asleep by the fountain, will never know how near Fate came to him and passed on.

I hope by Thursday week to have supplied the place of the delinquent — perhaps to our common advantage. Mary was a cook merely by a brevet conferred by herself, and I doubt whether she had the genius for that more transcendental touch which such a subject of unfallen innocence demands. The little creature might have been heathenishly sacrificed instead of being served up with that delicacy which befits Xtians. In such cases, a turn more or a turn less may lose all, and one who might afterwards have grown up into a learned pig (who knows but into a Professor!) is cut off untimely to no good purpose. Let us hope for the best — let

us hope that if *we* can't have him, the world may gain a Bacon or a Hogg or a Pig-aunt Lebrun. If we get a cook—and we already hear of one—our festival is but prorogued; luckily, *he* will not be too old, even with an added week. I shall send word at once, so think of a dinner being put off because there won't be a death in the family! My heart feels like a pig of lead;

But I am always affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

Don't think I have had a paralysis; I have only bought a gold pen.

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, April 6, 1869.

. . . Authors, my altogether dear woman, can't write letters. At best they squeeze out an essay now and then, burying every natural sprout in a dry and dreary *sand-flood*, as unlike as possible to those delightful freshets with which your heart overflows the paper. *They* are thinking of their punctuation, of crossing their *t's* and dotting their *i's*, and cannot forget themselves in their correspondent, which I take to be the true recipe for a letter. . . . Now, you know that the main excellence of Cambridge is that nothing ever happens there. Since the founding of the College, in 1636, there has been, properly speaking, no event till J. H. began to build his shops on the parsonage lot. . . .

Elmwood is Cambridge at the fifth power, and indeed one of the great merits of the country is that it narcotizes instead of stimulating. Even Voltaire, who had wit at will, found Ferney an opiate, and is forced to apologize to *his* cleverest correspondent, Mme. du Deffand (do you remark the adroitness of the compliment in my italicized pronoun?) for the prolonged gaps, or yawns, in his letter-writing. Cowper, a first-rate epistolizer, was sometimes driven to the wall in the same way. There is something more than mere vacancy, there is a deep principle of human nature, in the first question of man to man when they meet — “What is the news?” A hermit has none. I fancy if I were suddenly snatched away to London, my brain would prickle all over, as a foot that has been asleep when the blood starts in it again. Books are good dry forage; we can keep alive on them; but, after all, men are the only fresh pasture. . . .

We have had a very long winter with very little snow. It is still cold, but the birds are come, and the impatient lovers among them insist on its being spring. I heard a bluebird several weeks ago, but the next day came six inches of snow. The sparrows were the first persistent singers, and yesterday the robins were loud. I have no doubt the pines at Shady Hill are all a-creak with blackbirds by this time. . . .

I have nothing else in the way of novelty,



except an expedient I hit upon for my hens who were backward with their eggs. On rainy days I set William to reading aloud to them the Lay-sermons of Coleridge, and the effect was magical. Whether their consciences were touched or they wished to escape the preaching, I know not. . . .

*To Leslie Stephen*

*April 24, 1869.*

My dear Stephen,—By what system of mnemonics you contrived to remember those melon-seeds, I can't conjecture. I was glad to find that they were "Queen Anne's pocket-melons," because I was a subject of her most gracious majesty. I had not then established my independence. It pleased me also to have the fruit associated with some definite name. The former vagueness evaporated imagination (as Dr. Johnson might say) into a mere mist of conjecture. Now I can fancy Miss Hyde's august daughter pacing the gardens at Kensington, her pockets graced with the fruit which bore her name, and giving one to Harley or Bolingbroke or whatever purse-proud aristocrat happened to be the moment's favorite.

Within an hour after the seeds arrived they were in the ground, and already I watch with an almost paternal solicitude the gradual expansion of their leaves. Thus far they are doing

well, and if they escape the diseases of infancy, I hope you will sit down at table with their children's children. It was very good of you to remember them, and therefore just like you. They came like a fairy godmother's gift just as I was wishing I had them.

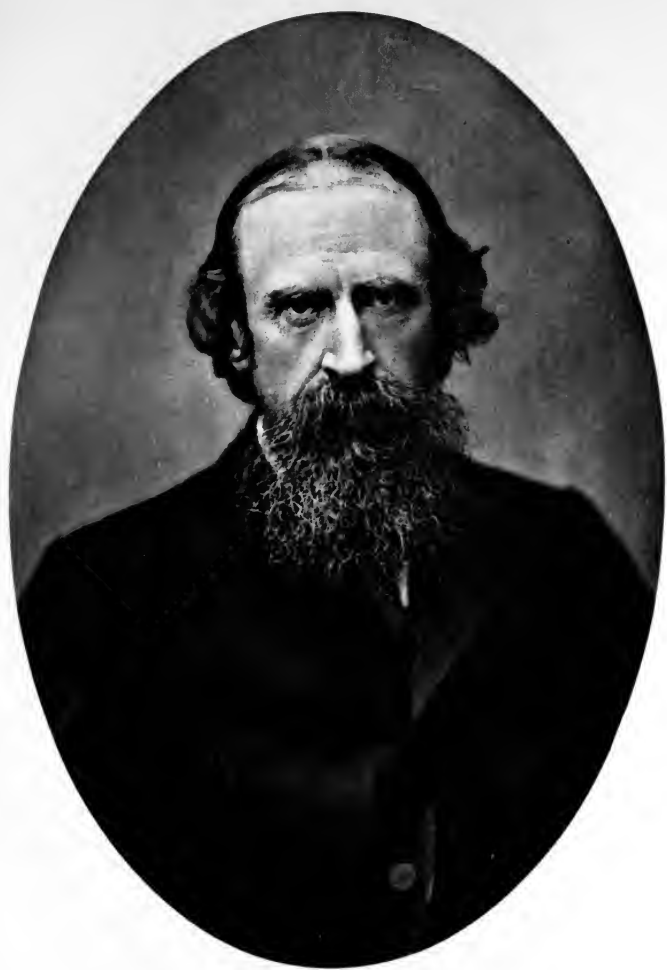
The great sensation of the day is Sumner's speech on the rejection of the treaty with Great Britain. I think he has expressed the national feeling of the moment pretty faithfully. Mind, I say of the moment. The country was blushing at the maudlin blarney of Reverdy Johnson, and that made the old red spot, where we felt that our cheek had been slapped, tingle again. If Mr. Adams had remained in England, I believe the whole matter might have been settled to the satisfaction of both parties. Now for some time to come that will unhappily be impossible. But our soberest heads do not think that Sumner is right in his statement of the law, and I think that the discussion which is likely to follow will clear the way for some reasonable settlement of the difficulty. That there is any annexation-cat under Sumner's meal I, for one, do not in the least believe. The absorption of Canada would be simply the addition of so much strength to the Democratic party — no bad thing in itself, by the way, but certainly not to the taste of the party now in power. Meanwhile, fools talk as glibly of a war with England



*Sir Leslie Stephen*

well, and if they escape the diseases of infancy, I hope you will sit down at table with their children's children. It was very good of you to remember them, and therefore just like you they came like a fairy godmother's gift just as I was wishing I had them.

The great occasion of the day is Sumner's speech on the extension of the treaty with Great Britain. I think he has expressed the national feeling of the moment pretty faithfully. Mind, I say of the moment. The country was blushing at the scolding Marney of Reverdy Johnson, and yet could not find the old red spot where we felt that we should have been slapped, flogged again. Had Adams had remained in England, I believe his daily master might have been entitled to say that he was the most able statesman of the day. Now for the future, that will unhappily be impossible. But our unborn heads do not think that we should give up the maintenance of the law, and I think that the extension which is likely to be made will show the way for some reasonable settlement in our difficulty. That there is any exaggeration under Sumner's pen, I, for one, do not in the least believe. The absorption of Canada would be simply the addition of so much strength to the Democratic party — no bad thing in itself, by the way, but certainly not in the case of the party now in power. Meanwhile, while we are at it, let us see what we can do with England.





as if it would not be the greatest wrong and calamity to civilization in all history. But I will not suffer myself to think of such an outrage. If the English government behave with discretion and show a kindly feeling towards us whenever they have a chance, I think all will come out right. It was the *tone* of Palmerston's cabinet, more than anything else during the war, that made the sore. The speech of Chandler of Michigan, by the way, is a sample of our folly in the same way. It may do harm in England — *here* it has no significance whatever. . . .

In certain respects you can say nothing worse of us than we deserve. The power of "Rings" in our politics is becoming enormous. Men buy their seats in the Senate, and, of course, expect a profit on their investment. This is why the Senate clung so to the Tenure-of-Office bill. Grant means well, but has his hands tied. We are becoming a huge stock-jobbery, and Republicans and Democrats are names for bulls and bears. Pitch into us on all these matters as you will. You will do us good, for English papers (except by a few barbarians like me) are more read here than ever before, and criticism — no matter how sharp if it be honest — is what we need.

Whatever happens, my dear Stephen, nothing can shake or alter the hearty love I feel for you. I was going to say *affection*, but the Saxon word

has the truer flavor. If you should ever be called upon to receive my sword hilt foremost, I am sure you will share your tobacco-pouch and canteen with me; and if ever I should take you prisoner, the worst you will have to fear will be to be made to eat too many pocket-melons. . . .

Always yours,

J. R. L.

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, May 2, 1869.

My dear Godkin, — . . . I note particularly (as merchants say) your remarks on British manners and our opinion of them. I would have said it myself — if only I had thought of it! A frequent cause of misapprehension is their not being able to understand that while there is no caste here, there is the widest distinction of classes. O my dear Godkin, they say we don't speak English, and I wish from the bottom of my heart we didn't — that we might comprehend one another! Impertinence and ill-will are latent in French — the Gaul can poison his discourse so as to give it a more agreeable flavor; but we clumsy Anglo-Saxons stir in our arsenic so stupidly it grits between the teeth. I wrote the essay you allude to, mainly with the hope of bringing about a better understanding. My heart aches with apprehension as I sit here in my solitude and brood



over the present aspect of things between the two countries. We are crowding England into a fight which would be a horrible calamity for both—but worse for us than for them. It would end in our bankruptcy and perhaps in disunion. (When I remember that both Ireland and Scotland have been the allies of France, I don't feel sure which side the South would take.) As for Canada—I doubt if we should get by war what will fall to us by natural gravitation if we wait. We don't want Canada; all we want is the free navigation of the St. Lawrence, and that England will yield us ere long. We have no better ground of action than Dr. Fell would have had because people did n't like him. It is not so much of what England *did* as of the *animus* with which she did it that we complain—a matter of sentiment wholly incapable of arbitration. Sumner's speech expressed the *feeling* of the country very truly, but I fear it was not a wise speech. Was he not trying rather to chime in with that feeling than to give it a juster and manlier direction? After all, it is not the Alabama that is at the bottom of our grudge. It is the Trent that we quarrel about, like Percy and Glendower. That was like an east wind to our old wound and set it a-twinge once more. Old wrongs are as sure to come back on our hands as cats. England had five thousand Americans (she herself admitted that she had

half that number) serving enforcedly aboard her fleets. Remember what American seamen then were, and conceive the traditions of injustice they left behind them with an *exoriare aliquis* ! That imperious despatch of Lord John's made all those inherited drops of ill blood as hot as present wrongs. It is a frightful tangle — but let us hope for the best. I have no patience with people who discuss the chances of such a war as if it were between France and Prussia. It is as if two fellows half way down the Niagara rapids should stop rowing to debate how far they were from the fall. As for Butler's "Wait till I catch you in a dark lane!" I have no words for it.

I could not at first think *what* book about Rome you meant. At length I recollected Duppa's "Papal Subversion." This, I take it, is the passage you mean. 'T is a note on p. 79. "Such was the mild, or rather corrupt, state of the Roman government, that during the late pontificate culprits were rarely punished with death for any crime: hence the slightest offence between individuals was a sufficient plea to justify any atrocity, and each often became avenger of his own wrong by assassination. [Hang the fellow! what a talent of prolongation he has!]" To such an excess was this arrived that, during twenty-two years of the late reign, not less than eighteen thousand persons were murdered in

public and private quarrels in the Ecclesiastical State alone, according to the bills of mortality in the governor's office, where from every district a return was annually made.

"It was a common opinion that it was the Pope's particular aversion to capital punishment that produced this laxity in the administration of justice, but I have it from high authority that he never saved any man from death who had been condemned by the law. Justice, indeed, would seem not to have been worse administered by the officers of the State in this reign than in that of his penultimate predecessor Rezzonico, in whose pontificate, which comprehended a period of little more than eleven years, ten thousand murders were committed in the papal dominions, of which at least one third were perpetrated in the city of Rome."

That is all I find to your purpose. Is this what you meant? While I am copying, I send you an extract from the "Letters of an American Farmer" (1782), by H. St. John Crève-cœur — dear book, with some pages in it worthy of Selborne White. . . . Perhaps it will help you to a paragraph. 'T is a consolation to see that the gloomy forebodings of the Frenchman have not yet been realized.

"Lawyers . . . are plants that will grow in any soil that is cultivated by the hands of others, and, when once they have taken root,

they will extinguish every vegetable that grows around them. The fortunes they daily acquire in every province from the misfortunes of their fellow-citizens are surprising! The most ignorant, the most bungling member of that profession will, if placed in the most obscure part of the country, promote litigiousness, and amass more wealth without labor than the most opulent farmer with all his toils. They have so dexterously interwoven their doctrines and quirks with the laws of the land, or rather they are become so necessary an evil in our present constitutions, that it seems unavoidable and past all remedy. What a pity that our forefathers, who happily extinguished so many fatal customs, and expunged from their new government so many errors and abuses, both religious and civil, did not also prevent the introduction of a set of men so dangerous! . . . The nature of our laws, and the spirit of freedom, which often tends to make us litigious, must necessarily throw the greatest part of the property of the colonies into the hands of these gentlemen. In another century the law will possess in the north what now the Church possesses in Peru and Mexico."—There's a gloomy prospect for us! We have only thirteen years' grace, and the century of prophecy will have dribbled away to the last drop.

Pray give Henry Wilson a broadside for dip-

ping his flag to that piratical craft of the eight-hour men. I don't blame him for sympathizing with his former fellow-craftsmen (though he took to unproductive industry at the first chance), but I have a thorough contempt for a man who pretends to believe that eight is equal to ten, and makes philanthropy a stalking-horse. Jove! what a fellow Aristophanes was! Here is Cleon over again with a vengeance.

It troubles me to hear that you of all men should be in low spirits, who ought to have store of good spirits in the consciousness that you are really doing good. The "Nation" is always cheering to me; let its success be a medicine to you. . . .

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

*To W. D. Howells*

ELMWOOD, May 12, 1869.

My dear Howells,—I have just got a letter from Miss Norton, in which she says, "What an enchanting little paper that is on 'My Doorstep Acquaintance,' by Mr. Howells! The pretty pictures in it come up before me as I write, and I am not quite sure whether Cambridge is in Italy—though, now I think of it, I know Italy is sometimes in Cambridge! When you see Mr. Howells, please tell him how much we all liked his sketches of our old friends."

There's for you! Put that in your pipe and smoke it! I liked it as much as they did.

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

*To Miss Mabel Lowell*

ELMWOOD, May 22, 1869.

I was glad enough, you may be sure, to read the telegram which told of your safe arrival on the other side. We had such blustering weather here for three or four days after you sailed as made the old house tremble and kept me awake thinking of you on the tumbling sea. However I trust seasickness was the worst of your troubles, and now that your bed no longer curvets under you like a steed that knows its rider, you look back with all the more Lucretian satisfaction on the *mare magnum* you have escaped. . . . Everything here goes on as usual. The trees are in blossom and the birds singing, but the weather is still so cold that I have a fire. . . .

I hate the state of affairs which Sumner's speech has occasioned with all my heart, but with a little forbearance on the English side, it will pass over and the two countries will be able to treat on some tenable grounds honorable to both. Don't allow yourself any spread-eagleism about the matter, for we are as clearly in the wrong now as England was before. I give your patriotism this warning and advise you, when-

ever politics come up, to turn the conversation, à la Monsieur Crépin, to the landscape.

Be sure and see the Hogarths while you are in London. Some of the best are or were at the Sloane Museum. There is nothing like them in the world. One Shakespeare, one Hogarth. They will teach you to distinguish the true realism of nature from its matter-of-fact counterfeit in the later Dutch school. If you should see Mr. Browning give him my most cordial remembrances. I am rejoiced to see that the claim I made for him twenty-two years ago is now so generally admitted. . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, June 14, 1869.

I have just got back from Ithaca — a little surprised at the ten years' persistency of Ulysses in trying to get back thither, and yet charmed with the place itself, which is one of the prettiest I have ever seen. The town lies on the broad level deposited by the main feeders of Cayuga Lake, at its head and embosomed in trees. All around it lie hills rounded like those we see across the marshes at Brighton, but higher than they, chequered to the top with alternate fields of young wheat or pasture and patches of woodland, the whole as boisterously green as anything you will see in England. If you climb one of these, you see the same landscape wal-

lowing away to the horizon. This great stretch of verdure is based on endless depths of clay-slate, now lying in sheets well-nigh as thin as paper, now in harder layers from three inches to as many feet in thickness. The soil, a tough clay, slippery as soap after a rain, hoards all the moisture, which gathers itself into rills, then brooks, and at last large streams in every hollow, eating their way to the lake as the rock will let them by a succession of waterfalls through ravines as lovely as I ever saw. The nature of the rock gives to these gorges a look of architecture in ruins. Here you see a crumbling buttress, there the half of a broken arch, and sometimes you fancy feudal towers along the edge of a cliff above you. These ravines, where you are high enough for a wide view, you see run crinkling from the lake like the cracks in a pane of glass round a pistol-shot, crooked streaks darkened with evergreen. The waterfalls are of all heights, sizes, and characters. There are several of more than a hundred feet, and one falls sheer two hundred and twenty-five. They tumble now this way, now that, now leaping clear, now covering a sloping semicircle of black rock with a wavering lace-work of thinnest water-snow, according to the whim of the stone as that is more or less collusive with the feminine wiles of the stream and yields to or resists its fluent persistence. At Enfield, the prettiest



fall I saw, — prettier even than Trenton, — the last leap of the water crumbling from ledge to ledge, with endless change of fancy, for about a hundred feet, had hollowed a kind of amphitheatre, round which were cliffs of fifty fathom, their fringe of birches and hemlocks leaning over between us and the sky and seeming to cling with roots all clutching desperately backward as they looked down and listened. These cliffs were very beautiful in color — sometimes gray and yellow with lichens or reddened with iron-rust, sometimes, where there was an ooze of water, painted with slimy green, and sometimes shivery halfway up with delicate ferns. . . .

I am glad Mr. T. gave you his “Maud,” which seems to me in some ways his best poem. Don’t let Mr. Browning’s lisp frighten you. Lisp or no lisp, he has contrived to say some of the finest things that have been said in this generation. Men of genius, my dear Hopkins, are not so plenty in this world that you can afford to be nice. Speaking of poets, we are full of birds, and a pair of orioles have built in the elm to the right of the front-door (as you sit on the steps) within ten feet of the house and not more than six of the ground. It is such a nest as I never saw before — woven wholly of carpet-ravellings and as bright as a blossom. I am going to crib it after they have done with it. They have raised one brood, and seem to have

another under way. Yesterday afternoon the tree was flashing with them. I counted seven males in it at the same time.

. . . I hope you will see Mr. Hughes and say all manner of kind things to him from me. Also the Stephens. You won't soon find a better man than he.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, July 1, 1869.

Your nice long letter from Gad's Hill came while we were at breakfast, and I went so far as to lay down the sacred "Advertiser" and read your news instead. I found it very entertaining—more so, I may honestly say, than an average "Daily." I thoroughly enjoy all your pleasure as the old root down in the dark is said to thrill with the dance of the leaves out of sight in the sunshine. They send it news of sun and sky—and your sun and sky are uncommonly good of their kind. I was amused with Mr. Tennyson's message and the touch of nature in it which made him forget that the word I used of him was patchouli and think it was musk. How softly all our nerves are imbedded in the guardian fat of self-conceit, and how we contrive, as Dante says, to receive the edge of a sarcasm (which gives only a flesh-wound) rather than the point, which might reach the life! I am glad he (Tennyson) gave you his "Maud," for, inco-

herent as it is, I think it the strongest and most characteristic of his poems. I can't help thinking that he whines a little now and then — "entuned in his nose most featously" — but here he rises to a real shriek of passion that thrills us like the inarticulate scream of a beast in pain. (It is a bad thing for one's correspondents, I find, that one has been lecturing these dozen years.) I am very glad you have seen him, for he has so well understood the secret of finish that he will outlive all his depreciators. Have n't I lived to see Scott and Byron underrated for a while and then come to the top again as in their several ways they deserve? It is a bad thing for an author with the next generation that he has been the fashion with the one before. My dear child, don't judge an author by what he is (as you seem inclined to do with Mr. Browning), but by what he does. What he "is" may be, after all, only what he seems to be to this or that person (an impertinent young hussy, for example, with pretty keen eyes, to be sure, but no experience to see through 'em with), while what he does we can look at in more than one mood. I am driven, you see, into the professor's chair because we have no news here. We are that model commonwealth that has no history.

But I wish to save you so far as I can from my own mistakes. Take the world as you find it, and if you would make the most of it put

the keenest point on your eyes for the merits of others and for the defects of — but really you will expect to find this letter signed R. L. Edgeworth or Thomas Day. I am in training for a heavy father.

But it does take a good while to secrete the honey (or the venom) for a good letter in my solitudes, and I doubt if a pen that has once grown professional can limber itself to that free and easy kind of thing. . . . However, I have picked up a thing or two in the way of news since I wrote last. . . . Mrs. — has come over from Paris on a visit. She is handsomer than ever — better groomed too, which was highly desirable — and she sings — well, let us say like a fallen angel. Don't mistake — I only mean that she devotes one of the most wonderful voices I ever heard to French songs that bring with them a faint whiff of the Regency. I seem to see her now flashing her great brown eyes on me with that knowing simplicity, that demure naïveté of long training, which is the highest art of the drawing-room siren, as she warbled *Je croyais que l'amour était bien autre chose*. I am carried back a hundred years. A shepherdess slips by me, but *incessu patet*, the ankle betrays her: it is some *grande dame de par le monde* who has just left her coach to share in a fête at Bagnolet. Pardon my pedler's French — *mais je ne pourrais pas la décrire sans m'en*

*servir, elle s'est si parfaitement deBostonisée.* I don't mean that there is the least real harm in the woman. She was made so, and I have a notion that Nature knows pretty well what she is about. A real type is never to be quarrelled with; it is the factitious ones that are hateful. I find no fault, but how I do sometimes love that American greenness that is at such disadvantage in the salon, and which a single Parisian summer is apt to turn so brown. Your cousin —— said to me that —— was a capital subject for flirtation. "No," said I, "she is too knowing: there is no fun in flirtation unless it hurts." Mrs. ——, by the way, wore strung round her neck by a pink ribbon more than a dozen lockets of the largest size, some of them with ciphers in brilliants. They no doubt enclosed the hair of some of her many victims, and I could not help looking on them as a string of scalp-locks, as it were, the harmless trophies of so many sham-fights. . . . M. confessed to me that she was sorry —— had not followed my advice and gone upon the stage. What a career she would have had! She might even have married some deboshed duke and worn that coronet of thorns which women somehow never seem to find painful. Well, I am glad I have seen her, for I have so much of the artist in me, at least, that I like to see even what I don't like. I don't know even but I might like her, for

her art is a first and not a second nature. She was born an actress and ogled in her cradle. . . .

Commencement was as usual, except that there was the largest gathering of graduates I ever saw. The dinner was not much duller than usual. Wendell Holmes read some delightful verses, I some not so delightful. But seven layers of wet blankets had been already carefully spread over us by as many presidents of colleges and other patent fire-extinguishers, and I came so late that I resolved never to try it again. Among other things I had a compliment to Charles Adams, but he had already left the hall, so that what would have been a hit became a fizz. However, there is no great fun in complimenting Adamses, for they come into the world ahead of all praise and only wonder at your inadequacy. My verses were literally an impromptu, and here are the only good ones among them.

THE ENGLISH RHYMED HEROIC

A metre easy if you write it ill,  
Hard if the sense constrain the verse's will:  
A boy can poise it; a strong man in vain  
May this tough bow of large-limbed Dryden strain;  
The twanging string performs its empty rite, —  
The shaft falls prone, inert to sing or smite.

And Mr. Fields may like to hear my bit of  
praise for the Autocrat: —

What would I give for Holmes's facile grace,  
Where wit and pathos hold their equal pace!

Facile it seems to him who doth not know  
What years were spent for Giotto's careless O:  
Take, thoughtless ears, a jester's word for once, —  
Nothing is facile — save to be a dunce.

The newspapers inform me that my verses were "full of wit and elicited much laughter," but the trouble with me is that I never can play with the gloves without hitting out. However, the thing did its business, which was to keep me on my legs for ten minutes.

We are in the midst of haying and have had catching weather with a vengeance. It has rained almost every day and moreover been muggily sultry. Every dog has chosen this June to have his day in, impatient of his star's delay.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, July 12, 1869.

. . . And that reminds me of an interview I had a day or two ago with a cadaverous gentleman who wished me to subscribe a hundred dollars to the Labor Reform League, an arrangement which is to give us back those admirable guilds of the Middle Ages and abolish Political Economy from the face of the earth. You know that that tough old aristocrat the Marquis of Thompson Lot<sup>1</sup> is capable at times of great frankness of speech, and this astonished missionary got the full benefit of it. "Not a stiver!" growled

<sup>1</sup> A humorous eponym for himself.

the M. of T. L., "though I would gladly subscribe to put 'em down. What they want is to make this world comfortable to the lazy and the botchers of work, which it never was and never will be till you get rid of God and his laws. This is the five and twentieth Millennium and Fool's Paradise that has been promised in my time. You want to contrive by law that brains and no brains shall always be on an equality. How are you going to keep 'em so? You talk about Capital, but you mean Property—the very basis of all civilization. What you want is Barbarism with a nice little revolution as gentleman-usher!" and much more of the same sort. Cadaverous Missionary of the Pit, "But you don't seem exactly to understand. The—the—I don't know what the reason is, but I never had such a difficulty in expressing myself in my life." Marquis of T. L., shaking the subscription-book indignantly, "That's because you're not used to freedom of speech. Here you've got Wendell Phillips and William B. Greene down for a hundred dollars each. How did they earn it? Did they ever do a day's work in their lives?" C. M. "Well, I don't know as they ever did." That *as* finished the Marquis. Turning suddenly on his victim, he asked, "You're a great sufferer from indigestion?" C. M. "Well, yes, I suffer considerable from dyspepsy." M. of T. L., with blandest defer-



ence. "May I ask if you are at work in any productive form of industry?" C. M. (visibly doubled up). "I can't say that I am just at present. My health has ben so feeble." Marquis. "Suppose you tried working on a farm?" C. M. "I did in the fore part of my life, but it was too hard, I was n't rugged enough. But you'll admit that they ought to shorten the hours of work in factories where they don't git a mite of fresh air all day long." Marquis. "Did you ever see an American that liked fresh air? I never did. Why, I can hardly get a window open in a car without being mobbed. Are the girls that work in factories less healthy than the farmers' wives?" C. M. "Well, it's because the farmers' wives are overworked." Marquis. "What? in villages where there are cheese factories? Nonsense! It's because they are too lazy or too ignorant to make decent bread, or to tolerate ventilation, that they look so cadaverous. I suppose the present arrangement of things will last my time. If not, why, I am all ready to mount your guillotine." C. M. "But you don't expect anything of that kind?" Marquis. "Who expected the French Revolution? Who expected our Civil War? Did n't every fool in France take his own particular theory, a soap bubble lighted with moonshine, for the rising of the sun of righteousness? They believed just as you do that the world was a

kind of hourglass that was to be turned upside down at regular intervals. Here are you who don't know anything of history (which is nothing more than experience bottled for domestic use) and you think you can make the world over so that what the Lord made for the bottom shall *stay* at the top." C. M. "Then you believe in two classes of men, do you? One always to be over the other?" He thought he should frighten the Marquis and that he would n't dare to say *yes*. Marquis. "Of course I do. Don't you? You want to lead me and not follow me at this moment. But let me ask you a question. Do you believe in the Maine Law?" He did n't see where he was coming out, and so answered cheerfully that he did n't. Marquis. "Very good. And you want to apply the *principle* of the Maine Law to all other modes of men's private business—that is, where it don't interfere with your particular tastes?" C. M. "Well, as I said a spell ago, I seem to have somehow another a kind of oppression on my chest so's't I can't seem to argue freely." So we went on for three quarters of an hour, and I hope it did the Missionary good. The Marquis's lungs were the better for it, at any rate. At last I told him I could n't spare any more time and sent him off with a fine entomological specimen in his ear. As he was going he said he had been astonished at "hear-

ing such views" (hearing a view!) from me. "Well," said I, "you ought to be thankful for it. Isn't it refreshing to find now and then an American who'll tell you what he really thinks about anything?" And so we parted, and I have not the least doubt he will hold me up for a bloated bondholder in the next speech he makes. . . .

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, July 16, 1869.

My dear Godkin, — I have long been of that philosopher's opinion who declared that "nothing was of much consequence" — at least when it concerned only ourselves, and certainly my verses were of none at all. I copied them for *you*, not for myself.

But the "Nation" is of consequence, and that's the reason I am writing now, instead of merely melting, to which the weather so feelingly persuades. You have never done better than in the last six months. Indeed, I think that you have improved with your growing conviction of your own power — a fact which has, if possible, increased my respect for you. At any rate, it proves that you are to be counted among the strong and not the merely energetic. Most editors when they feel their power are like beggars on horseback. I don't see why everybody doesn't take the "Nation." I always read it

*through*, and I never read the editorials in any other paper. My opinion is worth as much as the next man's, at least, and I see no paper that is so uniformly good. I was looking over some numbers of the "Pall Mall" yesterday, and didn't think it at all up to your (I mean E. L. G.'s) standard. This is not loyalty, but my deliberate opinion. Your reception<sup>1</sup> the other day should show you (and that is all I value it for) that your services to the cause of good sense, good morals, and good letters are recognized. You have *hit*, which is all a man can ask. Most of us blaze away into the void, and are as likely to bring down a cherubin as anything else. Pat your gun and say, "Well done, Brown Bess!" For 'tis an honest, old-fashioned piece, of straightforward short-range notions, and carries an ounce ball.

And in other respects the "Nation" has been excellent lately. I have n't seen a better piece of writing than that French *atelier*. It is the very best of its kind. Cherish that man, whoever he is. Whatever he has seen he can write well about, for he really *sees*. Why, he made me see as I read. The fellow is a poet, and all the better for not knowing it.

It is the unsettled state of affairs that is hurting you, if anything, though your advertising pages look prosperous. Wells, I am told, pro-

<sup>1</sup> At the Commencement Dinner at Harvard University.

phies a crash for 1870, and fears that Congress will be weak enough to water the currency again—in other words, the national stock. I am not yet cured of my fear of repudiation, I confess. Democracies are kittle cattle to shoe behind. It takes men of a higher sense of honor than our voters mostly are to look at national bankruptcy in any other than a business light—and whitewash of all kinds is *so* cheap nowadays. Still, in spite of my fears, I think we shall come out all right, for a country where everybody does something has a good many arrows in its quiver. And though I believe that property is the base of civilization, yet when I look at France, I am rather reconciled to the contempt with which we treat its claims. There are, after all, better things in the world than what we call civilization even.

Always yours,

J. R. L.

*To W. D. Howells*

ELMWOOD, *August 11, 1869.*

My dear Howells,—Up to time, indeed! The fear is not about time, but space. You won't have room in your menagerie for such a displeaseworthy saurus. The verses if stretched end to end in a continuous line would go clear round the Cathedral they celebrate, and nobody (I fear) the wiser. I can't tell yet what they are.

There seems a bit of clean carving here and there, a solid buttress or two, and perhaps a gleam through painted glass ; but I have not copied it out yet, nor indeed read it over consecutively.

As for the poem you sent me, I should have printed it when I sat in your chair. I will not criticise it further than to say that there is a great deal too much epithet. The author has wreaked himself on it. I should say *herself*, for I guess 't is a gal.

Here was I, who have just written an awfully long thing,<sup>1</sup> going to advise the shortening of this other. But such is human nature, capable, I am thankful to say, of every kind of inconsistency. However, I am always consistently yours,

J. R. L.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, Thursday.

. . . Thank you from the bottom of my heart, old fellow, for your note. If I divine that it is partly *me* that you like in the poem, I am all the more pleased. I don't care how much or how long we mutually admire each other, if it make us happier and kindlier, as I am sure it does. No man's praise, at any rate, could please me more than yours, and your affectionate messages will send me to my college lecture this

<sup>1</sup> "The Cathedral."

afternoon with a better heart. God bless you !  
Keep on writing, and among other things billets-  
doux like this, which made my eyelids tremble  
a little with pleasure.

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

P. S. I have n't a minute to spare, but I am  
just going to read it over again, lest I missed  
any of the sweetness.

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, September 6, 1869.

1. You order me, dear Jane, to write a sonnet.
2. Behold the initial verse and eke the second ;
3. This is the third (if I have rightly reckoned),
4. And now I clap the fourth and fifth upon it
5. As easily as you would don your bonnet ;
6. The sixth comes tripping in as soon as beckoned,
7. Nor for the seventh is my brain infécund ;
8. A shocking rhyme ! but, while you pause to con it,
9. The eighth is finished, with the ninth to follow ;
10. As for the tenth, why, that must wedge between
11. The ninth and this I am at present scrawling ;
12. Twelve with nine matches pat as wings of swallow ;
13. Blushingly after that comes coy thirteen ;
14. And this crowns all, as sailor his tarpauling.

I confess that I stole the idea of the above  
sonnet from one of Lope de Vega's, written  
under similar circumstances. Now, in that very  
sonnet Lope offers you a bit of instruction by  
which I hope you will profit and never again

ask for one in twelve lines. He says, in so many words,

“ *Catorce versos dicen que es soneto,*”

one more than even the proverbial baker's dozen, which shows the unthriftiness of poets in their own wares — or, perhaps you will say, their somewhat tiresome liberality. I dare say most sonnets would be better if cut off, like the cur's tail, just behind the ears. Having given you this short and easy lesson in the essential element of Petrarch's inspiration, I now proceed to do another sonnet in the received sentimental style of those somewhat artificial compositions.

Ah, think not, dearest Maid, that I forget!  
Say, in midwinter doth the prisoned bee  
Forget the flowers he whilom held in fee?  
In free-winged fantasy he hovers yet  
O'er pansy-tufts and beds of mignonette.  
And I, from honeyed cells of memory  
Drawing in darkened days my stores of thee,  
Seek La Pacotte on dream-wings of regret.  
I see thee vernal as when first I saw,  
Buzzing in quest of sugar for my rhyme;  
And this, my heart assures me, is Love's law,  
That he annuls the seasons' frosty crime,  
And, warmly wrapped against Oblivion's flaw,  
Tastes in his garnered sweets the blossoming thyme.

Perhaps the eighth verse would be better thus,

Fly on dream-wings to La Pacotte, you bet!

That, at least, has the American flavor, which our poetry is said to lack. . . . I do not mean



by the twelfth verse to insinuate anything unfeeling. It is merely to be in keeping with the laws of the sonnet, and to bring the thought back to where it set out, like a kitten playing with its own tail. But I will confess to you that I am getting so gray that *I* see it; so you may be sure there is not much to choose between me and the traditional badger. Happily, I am grown no stouter, though already "more fat than bard beseems."

But why have I not written all this while? . . . For all August I have a valid excuse. First, I was writing a poem, and second, a pot-boiler. The poem turned out to be something immense, as the slang is nowadays, that is, it ran on to eight hundred lines of blank verse. I hope it is good, for it fairly trussed me at last and bore me up as high as my poor lungs will bear into the heaven of invention. I was happy writing it, and so steeped in it that if I had written to you it would have been in blank verse. It is a kind of religious poem, and is called "A Day at Chartres." I remember telling Charles once that I had it under my hair. . . . I can't tell yet how it will stand. Already I am beginning to — to — you know what I mean — to taste my champagne next morning. However, you will see it in the January "Atlantic," and you must try to like it and me. I can't spare either. . . .

*To Miss Cabot*

ELMWOOD, September 14, 1869.

. . . The advantage of study, I suspect, is not in the number of things we learn by it, but simply that it teaches us the one thing worth knowing — not *what*, but *how* to think. Nobody can learn that from other people. Apart from the affection I feel for you, I have always liked in you a certain independence of character and a tendency to judge for yourself. Both these are excellent if kept within bounds, if you do not allow the one to degenerate into insubordination of mind and the other into hastiness of prejudice. Now, I am inclined to think that one may get a reasonably good education out of any first-rate book if read in the right way. Take Dante or Milton, for example. If you like or dislike a passage, insist with yourself on knowing the reason why. You are already unconsciously learning rhetoric in the best way. Then ask yourself what is contemporary and what perdurable in his theology and the like. You are not only studying the history of his time, but also, what is vastly more important, [learning] to look with deeper insight at that of your own time. You see what I mean. If all roads lead to Rome, so do all roads lead out of Rome to every province of thought. What one wants is to enlarge his mind, to make it

charitable, and capable of instruction and enjoyment from many sides. When one has learned that, he has begun to be wise — whether he be *learned* or not is of less consequence. How is it possible, I always ask myself in reading, that a man *could* have thought so and so, and especially a superior man? When I have formed to myself some notion of that, I understand my contemporaries better, for every one of us has within ten miles' circuit specimens of every generation since Adam.

But I am preaching, my dear Lilla, and you don't like any preaching but Dr. Clarke's perhaps? What I mean is that our aim should be not to get many things into one's head, but to get *much*, and one gets that when he has learned the relations of any one thing to all others; because in so doing he has got the right way of looking at anything. I have no fear that your education will be neglected, because I am sure that you will look after it yourself — because, moreover, you have an alert nature and a scorn of ignoble things. . . .

*To Thomas Hughes*

Elmwood, CAMBRIDGE, *September 18, 1869.*

My dear Hughes, — We are all very well satisfied with the result of the match.<sup>1</sup> For my own

<sup>1</sup> The race between an Oxford and a Harvard four-oar crew, on the Thames, of which Mr. Hughes was the umpire.

part, I have always thought that "magnis tamen excidit ausis" was not a bad kind of epitaph. I should only be sorry if our defeat were attributed to want of bottom. Our crew had already pulled a four-mile race on their own water and won it against a crew of professional oarsmen. I think that in private we may claim a little on the score of change of climate, though, of course, they had to take their chance of that. I am particularly glad to know that you thought it a good pull, because you have a right to an opinion. I did not expect them to win, though I hoped they would. Especially I hoped it because I thought it would do more towards bringing about a more friendly feeling between the two countries than anything else. I am glad to think it has had that result as it is. It is n't the Alabama claims that rankle, but the tone of the English press, or the more influential part of it. There is a curious misapprehension about us over there, as if we had been a penal colony. For example: when Longfellow was in Rome he drove out to some races on the Campagna. There his carriage chanced to be abreast of one in which two English ladies were discussing the manners of American girls. At last one of them summed up thus: "Well, you know, what can be expected of people who are all descended from laboring men or convicts?" Now, between ourselves, one of the things that has always amused

me in my brother New-Englanders is their fondness for family trees. You will remember that I made a little fun of it in the introduction to the first series of the "Biglow Papers." It is a branch of arboriculture in which I take no great interest myself, but my father was as proud of his pedigree as a Talbot or a Stanley could be, and Parson Wilbur's genealogical mania was a private joke between us. Now, you can understand how the tone I speak of would be resented. I think Sumner's speech as an argument a mere colander, but it represented the temper of our people pretty exactly. On your side, it was all along assumed that England had a point of honor to maintain, and all along implied that this was something of which we naturally had no conception, and to which, of course, our side could lay no claim. Don't you see? Now, our point of honor runs back to the Little Belt and the President, as long ago as 1809 or so. In those days American seamen belonged to the very best class of our population, and there were five thousand such serving enforcedly on board your ships-of-war. Put it at half the number (which was admitted on your side), and fancy what a ramification of bitter traditions would thread the whole country from these men and their descendants. You know that such little chickens always come home to roost, and these are just beginning to flock in now. I am

writing all this that you may understand something of the feeling here.

I think that all we want is to be treated in a manly way. We don't want to be flattered, and some of us thought your newspapers went quite far enough in that direction just after the war. Tell us the truth as much as you like, it will do us good; but tell it in a friendly way, or at least not quite so much *de haut en bas*. Your letter in accepting the umpireship in the race hit precisely the right key. There are plenty of sensible men on this side of the water (more, I think, than I have found in any other country) — men, I mean, who are governed rather more, in the long run, by reason than by passion or prejudice. I did not like Sumner's speech, nor did the kind of men I speak of like it (and their opinions, though less noisily expressed, have more influence on our politics than you would suppose); but I am inclined to think it has done more good than harm. It served as a vent for a great deal of fire-damp that might have gone off with an explosion, and satisfied that large class who need the "you 're another" style of argument. If only some man in your government could find occasion to say that England had mistaken her own true interest in the sympathy she showed for the South during our civil war! No nation ever apologizes except on her knees, and I hope England is far

enough from being brought to that — no sane man here expects it — but she could make some harmless concessions that would answer all the purpose. I have pretty good authority for thinking that Motley was instructed to make no overtures on the Alabama matter, and perhaps it is as well to let things subside a little first. Still, I dread to have the affair left unsettled a moment longer than can be helped. Your greatest safeguard against us would be a settlement of the Irish land question. It is a heroic remedy, but you must come to it one day or other. I never believed in the efficacy of disestablishment. Arthur Young told you where the real trouble was eighty odd years ago. My fear is (as things stand now) that if England should get into a war, we could not (with our immense length of coast) prevent privateers from slipping out, and then! It would be a black day for mankind.

You ask me who "Bob Wickliffe" was. He was a senator from Kentucky, and Kentucky undertook to be neutral. It was a bull I thought we should take by the horns at once, as we had at last to do.

I have been writing a poem which I think you will like. It will be published in the "Atlantic Monthly" for January, and I shall send you a copy. I did not send you my last volume, because I knew you would get it earlier from

Macmillan, and you did not need it to assure you of my friendship. Mabel gives us hope of a visit from you next year. I need not say how welcome you will be.

Always heartily yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To Miss Mabel Lowell*

ELMWOOD, September 19, 1869.

We at last have a piece of news of our own, or at any rate one in which we shared equally with the rest of mankind. In short, we have had another September gale and it came on the eve of your birthday, namely, on the 8th. Mr. Howells came up just as we were rising from dinner, and a few drops of rain began to fall as I let him, and a pretty blustering puff of wind, in at the front door. He sat with me till about half past five, and as I bade him good-by it began to pour and the wind was freshening from the S. E. I immediately ordered the house to be close-reefed and everything battened down, for the sky showed a rising temper. We had hardly got everything fast when the wind hauled suddenly to the S. and blew 15-inch guns. I never saw such a hurly-burly in the air. It was all one whirl of leaves and twigs and boughs. I heard a crash — a great limb had gone from the elm that was split in September, 1815 — another — and half the dear old



mulberry was gone. I rushed out, and just as I got upon the south terrace came a report like a musket — a pine in the grove beyond the hot-beds had snapt short about eight feet from the root. You remember the three-thorned acacia that stands on the edge of the garden? Well, the gale ran in streaks. One of these struck the acacia, rent it in twain, and ploughing right on, knocked over four pines in a row. The width of this particular current was not more than twenty feet. It took down every tree from where it first plunged to where it got out into the open field. While I was watching this I heard a crack, and over went one of the English elms on the edge of the garden. I ran to the front walk, and was hardly there when the tallest in the row began to yield and at last fell, its tip within a few feet of me. It bowed a little, it hesitated, it sank slowly, it quickened, it crashed. Whoever wrote the song of Deborah and Barak had seen a tree fall: "At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down — dead." Another bolt struck by the cottage, uprooted the largest ash tree on the lane, and broke the finest one (next it) in every direction. Our old English elms did n't lose a twig, the tough old boys. They seemed to like it, and played with the storm like a strong man with the surf. I feared for the horse-chestnut I planted when

a child. It wallowed like a ship in the trough of the sea, but came out sound. It was worse because the trees were caught with all their sails set. The row of American elms behind the house seemed to rush and swerve like a green torrent. I never saw anything so grand as the whole episode, for it was nothing more, lasting only an hour. While it was yet raging a glim showed in the west and of a sudden the wind shifted to that quarter and lulled. It struggled now and then to get loose again, but it was no go. William<sup>1</sup> and I had to turn out and clear the road of wreck. As we were working away in the dusk, came along the wraith of a wagon driven by a kind of blur that had the shape of man. It pulled up and a voice came out of the wind—"Ben a-prunin' yer trees considerable, ain't ye?" People that go to Europe lose a good deal, you see, in the way of meteorologic wonders.

*To W. D. Howells*

ELMWOOD, September 22, 1869.

My dear Howells,—Forgive this purple ink. It was palmed upon me the other day, who in my simple conservatism thought all the ink in the world was made by Maynard & Noyes, as it used to be. I have a horrible suspicion that it may be a "writing fluid"—still

<sup>1</sup> The man of all work.

worse, that it may treacherously turn black before you get this, and puzzle you as to what I am driving at. It is now, on my honor, of the color of pokeberry juice, whereof we used to make a delusive red ink when we were boys. I feel as if I were writing ancient Tyrian, and becoming more inscrutable to you with every word. Take it for "the purple light of love," and it will be all right.

I have a great mind (so strong is the devil in me, despite my years) to give you an awful pang by advising you not to print your essay. It would be a most refined malice, and pure jealousy, after all. I find it delightful, full of those delicate touches which the elect pause over and the multitude find out by and by — the test of good writing and the warrant of a reputation worth having. As Gray said of the romances of Crébillon *fi*ls, I should like to lie on a sofa all day long and read such essays. You know I would not flatter Neptune for his trident — as indeed who would, that did not toast his own bread? — but what you write gives me a real pleasure, as it ought; for I have always prized in you the ideal element, not merely in your thought, but in your way of putting it.

And one of these days, my boy, you will give us a little volume that we will set on our shelves, with James Howell on one side of him

and Charles Lamb on the other — not to keep *him* warm, but for the pleasure *they* will take in rubbing shoulders with him. What do you say to that? It's true, and I hope it will please you to read it as much as it does me to write it. Nobody comes near you in your own line. Your Madonna would make the fortune of any essay — or that pathetic bit there in the graveyard — or your shop of decayed gentilities — or fifty other things. I do not speak of the *tone*, of the light here and shade there that tickle me.

You were mighty good to procure me that little accession of fortune.<sup>1</sup> It will give Madam a new gown — a luxury she has not had these three years — and will just make the odds between feeling easy and pinched. It may be even a public benefaction — for I attribute the late gale in large part to my frantic efforts at raising the wind in season for my autumnal taxes. Yet a dreadful qualm comes over me that I am paid too much. When a poet reads his verses he has such an advantage over types! You will gasp when you see me in print. But never fear that I shall betray my craft. Far from me the baseness of refunding! Indeed I seldom keep money long enough for Conscience to get her purchase on me and her lever in play. What a safety there is in impecuniosity! And yet — let me read Dryden's Horace's "Ode to For-

<sup>1</sup> An additional payment for "The Cathedral."

tune," lest if a million come down upon me I should be so in love with security as<sup>1</sup> to put aside the temptation.

Now to the important part of my note. I want you to eat roast pig with me on Saturday next at half past four P. M. Your commensals will be J. H., Charles Storey, and Professor Lane — all true blades who will sit till Monday morning if needful. The pig is just ripe, and so tender that he would drop from his tail if lifted by it, like a mature cantaloupe from its stem. With best regards to Mrs. Howells,

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, September 28, 1869.

My dearest old Friend, — . . . I am very busy. It is a lovely day, cool and bright, and the Clerk of the Weather has just put a great lump of ice in the pitcher from which he pours his best nectar. Last night, as I walked home from Faculty Meeting, the northern lights streamed up like great organ-pipes, and loveliest hues of pink, green, and blue flitted from one to another in a silent symphony. To-day, consequently, is cold and clear, with a bracing dash of northwest. Cutler is ill, and I am shepherding his flocks for him meanwhile — now leading them among the sham-classic pas-

tures of Corneille, where a colonnade supplies the dearth of herbage ; now along the sunny, broad-viewed uplands of Goethe's prose. It is eleven o'clock, and I am just back from my class. At four I go down again for two hours of German, and at half past seven I begin on two hours of Dante. Meanwhile I am getting ready for a course of twenty University lectures, and must all the while keep the domestic pot at a cheerful boil. I feel somehow as if I understood that disputed passage in the " Tempest," where Ferdinand says,

" Most busy least when I do it " —

for I am busy enough, and yet not exactly in my own vocation. . . . As for the Rousseau article, I was looking it over a few days ago — I am going to make a volume this fall, and it is not one of my best. I have not confidence enough in myself to write my best often. Sometimes in verse I forget myself enough to do it, but one ought to be popular. If ever I become so, you shall see a better kind of J. R. L. To me Rousseau is mainly interesting as an ancestor. What a generation lay hidden in his loins ! and of children so unlike as Cowper and Wordsworth and Byron and Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo and George Sand ! It is curious that the healthier authors leave no such posterity. . . .

Your ever constant

J. R. L.

*To Miss Mabel Lowell*

ELMWOOD, September 30, 1869.

Your letters continue to give me great pleasure. I see clearly by them that your journey has done you good in mind and body. I was amused in your last by your onslaught on Raphael. Hazlitt used to snarl about "Raphael's brick-dust" as he called it, but for all that, the Dresden Madonna continues to be one of the noblest pictures in the world. Coloring is not everything; if it were you would have liked Rubens better. Refinement and grace are also something. I do not wonder you were carried away by the Venetians. I sympathize wholly with your admiration for them, but what Ferdinand says of Miranda is a good thing to bear in mind always when we criticise, "for several virtues have I liked several women," at the same time that he sees perfection only in her. It is the best rule for happiness in life, as well as for soundness of judgment in æsthetics, to find out why a thing is good rather than why it is bad. And if the discovery is more difficult, so much the better for us. I was glad you liked that most amiable of Titian's pictures, the "Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple." It is a great favorite of mine, and I seemed to stand beside you as you looked at it. You had seen it before, only you did not

remember it, for you were more pleased with a pomegranate blossom from a convent garden not far below the Academy on the Grand Canal.

*To T. B. Aldrich*

ELMWOOD, November 30, 1869.

My dear Aldrich, — It is a capital little book<sup>1</sup> — but I had read it all before, and liked it thoroughly. It has been pretty much all my novel reading all summer. I think it is wholesome, interesting, and, above all, natural. The only quarrel I have with you is that I found in it that infamous word “transpired.” E-pluri-bus-unum it! Why not “happened”? You are on the very brink of the pit. I read in the paper t’ other day that some folks had “extended a dinner to the Hon.” Somebody or other. There was something pleasing to the baser man in fancying it held out in a pair of tongs, as too many of our Hon’bles deserve — but consider where English is going!

I know something about Rivermouth myself — only before you were born. I remember in my seventh year opening a long red chest in the “mansion” of the late famous Dr. Brackett, and being confronted with a skeleton — the first I had ever seen. The “Mysteries of Udolpho” were nothing to it, for a child, some-

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of a Bad Boy.*



how, is apt to think that these anatomies are always made so by foul means, a creed which I still hold to a certain extent.

However, I am not writing to tell you about myself—but merely to say how much I like your little book. I wish it had been twice as large! I shall send you a thin one of my own before long, and shall be content if it give you half the pleasure. Make my kind remembrances acceptable to Mrs. Aldrich, and tell the twins I wish they may both grow up Bad Boys.

Cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, December 3, 1869.

. . . I think the article in the last “Quarterly” settles the Byron matter—and settles it as I expected. After this, any discussion of the particular charge in question seems to me a mere waste of pen and ink, perhaps (worse) of temper too. I doubt, even if this were not so, if I could at present treat it with the all-roundness it deserves. With four lectures a week, I am as busy as I can bear just now.

But I write to ask a favor of you. I read in my newspaper this morning that the dramatic critic of the “Daily News” has been giving a list of John Kemble’s odd pronunciations.

I should much like to see it, and thought it not unlikely that you might have a copy of the paper which you could spare me. If not, could you not get me one? I should be greatly obliged. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, *December 10, 1869.*

. . . My vacation was pretty well occupied with writing and rewriting my new poem, and then as usual coming back to the first draught as by far better than any after-thought. Those who have seen it think well of it. I shall contrive to send it you, and beg you not to read it in the "Atlantic" — for I have restored to it (they are printing it separately) some omitted passages, besides correcting a phrase here and there whose faultiness the stronger light of print revealed to me. How happy I was while I was writing it! For weeks it and I were alone in the world, till Fanny well-nigh grew jealous. You don't know, my dear Charles, what it is to have sordid cares, to be shivering on the steep edge of your bank-book, beyond which lies debt. I am willing to say it to you, because I know I should have written more and better. They say it is good to be obliged to do what we don't like, but I am sure it is not good for me — it wastes so much time in the mere forethought of what you are to do. And then I

sometimes think it hard that I, who have such an immense capacity for happiness, should so often be unhappy. I recoil, to be sure, with a pretty good spring, but I have learned what it is to despond. You know I don't sentimentalize about myself or I would not write this. You used to laugh when I told you I was growing dull, but it was quite true. A man is dull who can't give himself up without *arrière-pensée* to the present. I *do* lose myself (to find myself) in writing verse, and so I mean in some way to shape myself more leisure for it, even if I have to leave Elmwood. . . . I agree with Euripides that it is fitting—

Σοφὸν δὲ . . .

τόν θ' ὑμνοποιὸν, αὐτὸς ἂν τίκτῃ μέλη,  
χαίροντα τίκτειν· ἦν δὲ μὴ πάσῃ τόδε,  
οὔτοι δύναιτ' ἂν, οἰκοθέν γ' ἀτώμενος,  
τέρπειν ἂν ἄλλους· οὐδὲ γὰρ δίκην ἔχει.<sup>1</sup>

You will find this amplified in Juvenal's Seventh Satire. You see I am suffering a professor change! No; the truth is, I read Euripides through very carefully last winter, and took a great fancy to him. Æschylus for imagination (perhaps 'twas his time did it for him), Sophocles for strength, and Euripides for facility,

<sup>1</sup> "It is well that the poet, if he produce songs, should produce them with joy, for if, being troubled in himself, he felt it not, he could not delight others—the way would not be his." — *The Suppliants*, 182–185.

invention, and *go*. I guess him to be the more simply poet of the three. Anyhow, he delights me much as Calderon does, not for any power of thought, but for the perhaps rarer power of pleasing. As one slowly grows able to think for himself, he begins to be partial towards the fellows who merely entertain. Not that I don't find thought too in Euripides. . . .

I sometimes feel a little blue over the outlook here, with our penny-paper universal education and our workingmen's parties, with their tremendous lever of suffrage, decrying brains. . . . But the more I learn, the more am I impressed with the wonderful system of checks and balances which history reveals (our Constitution is a baby-house to it!), and the more my confidence in the general common-sense and honest intention of mankind increases. When I reflect what changes I, a man of fifty, have seen, how old-fashioned my ways of thinking have become, that I have lived quietly through that awful revolution of the civil war (I was cutting my hay while such a different mowing went on at Gettysburg); in short, that my whole life has been passed in what they call an age of transition, the signs of the times cease to alarm me, and seem as natural as to a mother the teething of her seventh baby. I take great comfort in God. I think he is considerably amused with us sometimes, but that he likes

us, on the whole, and would not let us get at the match-box so carelessly as he does, unless he knew that the frame of his Universe was fire-proof. How many times have I not seen the fire-engines of Church and State clanging and lumbering along to put out — a false alarm! And when the heavens are cloudy, what a glare can be cast by a burning shanty! . . .

Our new President<sup>1</sup> of the College is winning praise of everybody. I take the inmost satisfaction in him, and think him just the best man that could have been chosen. We have a real Captain at last.

I was very glad to get your account of Ferney. No, I never was there. I was too foolishly true to my faith in the blessing of Unexpectedness to visit many shrines. If I stumbled on them, well and good. But I would give a deal now that I had seen old Michel Eyquem's château — the first modern that ever confronted those hectoring ancients without casting down his eyes, bless his honest old soul! Yes, and Ferney, too. For we owe half our freedom now to the leering old mocker with an earnest purpose in spite of himself.

I wish, with all my heart, I *could* see you for a moment! For a while last spring I thought it possible I might be sent abroad. Hoar was strenuous for it, and I should have been very

<sup>1</sup> President Eliot.

glad of it then. . . . However, it all fell through, and I am glad it did, for I should not have written my new poem, and I hope to go abroad on my own charges one of these days, if I can only sell my land before I am too old. . . .

Well, I have been getting on with my University lectures as well as I could. Cutler was ill, and I had to take his classes in French and German — losing five weeks thereby. And then I worried myself out of sleep and appetite — and then I concluded to do the best I could under the circumstances. So I have been reading to my class with extempore commentary. I wrote out four lectures on the origin of the romance lingo and romantic poetry, and then took up Ferabras and Roland, and am now on the Trouvères. Twenty lectures scared me, and now my next is the sixteenth and I am not half through! . . .

We are having the most superb winter weather, though I have lost two of the noblest days of it before my fire. (I am burning Goody Blake fuel, by the way, supplied by the new September gale.) I do not envy you your olive trees, nor even your view of Florence, when I look out on the smooth white of my fields, with the blue shadows of the trees on it. Jane's feeling allusion to the Perseus gave me a twinge, though. I should like to see the lovely arches of that loggia again! Tell her not to turn up

her dear nose at a statue the story of whose casting is worth half the statues in the world — yes, and throw in the poems too. . . .

*To Charles Nordhoff*

ELMWOOD, December 15, 1869.

. . . You cannot set too high a value on the *character* of Judge Hoar. The extraordinary quickness and acuteness, the *flash* of his mind (which I never saw matched but in Dr. Holmes) have dazzled and bewildered some people so that they were blind to his solid qualities. Moreover, you know there are people — I am almost inclined to call them the majority — who are *afraid* of wit, and cannot see wisdom unless in that deliberate movement of thought whose every step they can accompany. I have known Mr. Hoar for more than thirty years, intimately for nearly twenty, and it is the solidity of the man, his courage, and his integrity that I value most highly. I think with you that his loss would be irreparable, if he should leave the cabinet for a seat on the bench. But I do not believe this to be so probable as the Washington correspondents would persuade us. I do not speak by authority, but only upon inference from what I know. If any change take place, it will be one in which Judge Hoar heartily concurs and which he is satisfied will be for the good of the country. If any one is

the confidential adviser of the President, I *guess* it is he. . . .

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, *January 24, 1870.*

. . . I am very glad you found anything to like in my poem, though I am apt to be lenient with my friends in those matters, content if they tolerate *me*, and leaving what I write to that perfectly just fate which in the long run awaits all literature. The article of Renan I had not then read, but have read it since with a great deal of interest. I think I see what you mean.

I should have written you long ago but for the scrap I enclose, which may now come too late to be of any use. But after writing that, it occurred to me that a somewhat longer article, giving some account of the different theories as to what the *Grail* was, might be interesting. For that I wanted a book which I had sent as a pattern to the binder, and which he had promised me on Friday last. Of course it did not come, and so I send my correction of Sir G. B.'s nonsense as it stands.

You cannot choose a subject into which you will not infuse interest by thought and knowledge. The one you mention seems to me a remarkably good one, and I hope I shall be here to see and hear you. A Boston audience is like every other in this — that they like a



serious discussion of any topic, and have an instinct whether it will be well handled or no. We have had a course of mountebanks this winter, and people will be all the more hungry for something serious and instructive. That I am sure you will give them, whatever you talk about. . . .

Many thanks for the cutting from the "Daily News." It was just what I wanted. Every one of Kemble's pronunciations is a Yankeeism, confirming me in my belief that these are mostly archaisms and not barbarisms. . . .

*To R. S. Chilton*

ELMWOOD, March 17, 1870.

. . . I had no notion what a conundrum I was making when I used the word "decuman"<sup>1</sup>—or decumane, as I should have spelt it. Where I got the word I am sure I don't know, nor had I the least doubt that it was to be found in all the dictionaries, till some one asked me what it meant. "Oh," I said, "you'll find it sure enough in Ovid somewhere." But no: Ovid speaks only of the tenth wave. "Well, then," I insisted, "try Lucan." He said ditto to Ovid. *Then* I hunted it up, and my Ducange defines it *fluctus vehementior sic*

<sup>1</sup> In "The Cathedral,"

. . . shocks of surf that clomb and fell,  
Spume-sliding down the baffled decuman.

*nude dictus*, citing examples from Festus and Tertullian. Perhaps neither a lexicographer nor a Father of the Church is very good authority for Latin, but in English I have my right of common, and I wanted the word for its melodic value. So I used it. I don't write verses with the dictionary at my elbow, but I think I shall probably come across the word somewhere in English again, where I no doubt met with it years ago.<sup>1</sup> A word that cleaves to the memory is always a good word — that's the way to test them. . . .

*To Leslie Stephen*

ELMWOOD, March 25, 1870.

My dear Stephen, — Your letter found me with a pipe in my mouth and a quarto volume containing "La Chevalerie Ogier l'Ardeinois" on my knee — a mediæval cucumber from which I hope to extract more sunbeams than from many others on which I have experimented. The fields all about us are white with snow (thermometer 18° this morning), and the weather is paying us off for the violets we had in blossom on January the 6th. We are all well and unchanged. Mrs. Lowell and I have been gadding as far as Washington — our business

<sup>1</sup> He had doubtless met with the word in Sir Thomas Browne's *Enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors*, Book vii. ch. xvii., which treats of the *fluctus decumanus*.

being to deliver some lectures in Baltimore. In Washington we spent three days — quite long enough — and if the country depended on its representatives for its salvation, I should despair of it. I liked Grant, and was struck with the pathos of his face ; a puzzled pathos, as of a man with a problem before him of which he does not understand the terms. But Washington left a very bad taste in my mouth, and I was glad to be out of it and back again with pleasant old Mrs. K—— in Baltimore. Of course, I had a good time with Judge Hoar. He and Mr. Cox struck me as the only really strong men in the Cabinet.

I am glad you liked "The Cathedral," and sorry for anything in it you did n't like. The name was none of my choosing. I called it "A Day at Chartres," and Fields rechristened it. You see with *my* name the episode of the Britons comes in naturally enough (it is historical, by the way). The truth is, I had no notion of being satirical, but wrote what I did just as I might have said it to you in badinage. But, of course, the tone is lost in print. Anyhow, there is *one* Englishman I am fond enough of to balance any spite I might have against others, as you know. But I have n't a particle. If I had met two of my own countrymen at Chartres, I should have been quite as free with them. . . .

How I should like to come over and pay you

a visit! But it seems more and more inaccessible, that other side of the water. Whenever I can turn my land into money I shall come across, but at present it is all I can do to pay the cost of staying where I am. What with taxes and tariffs, and the general high prices induced by the vulgar profuseness of my countrymen, a moderate income is fast becoming a narrow one in these parts. If I only had a few cadetships to sell! However, maybe one of these days a gray old boy will be trying to make out through his double eyeglass which is No. 16 in Onslow Gardens, and about half an hour thereafter Mrs. Stephen will be wondering whence comes that nasty smell of tobacco.

Affectionately ever,

J. R. L.

*To W. D. Howells*

ELMWOOD, *Friday*.

My dear Howells, — Who writes to me casts his bread on the waters. The carrier handed me your note on the road. I put it into my pocket and straightway forgot all about it.

We are told in a book (which I still look on as quite up to the level of any that have come out in my time) to do whatever we do with all our might. That's the way I forget my letters, and I hope I shall find my reward in the next world, for I certainly don't in this.

On the contrary, happening to thrust my hands into my pockets (I don't know why — there is seldom anything in them), I found your note, and it stuck into me like an unexpected pin in the girdle of Saccharissa. If you did n't want our company, you might want our room! Therefore, to be categorical, *I* am coming, as I said I would.

Mrs. Lowell has unhappily an inflamed eye, and is very sorry (for she prefers "My Summer in a Garden," I fear, to some more solid works done under her immediate supervision), and Miss Dunlap is in Portland. So the whole of our family can sit in one chair, like St. Thomas Aquinas's angels.

With kind regards to Mrs. Howells,  
Affectionately yours always,  
J. R. LOWELL.

*To Thomas Hughes*

ELMWOOD, June 11, 1870.

My dear Hughes, — The papers tell me you are coming hither, but I fear the news is too good to be true. But if you are, you know who will be delighted to take you by the hand and to say "*Casa de usted*" with more than Spanish sincerity.

If this reaches you in time, pray let me hear from you as to your plans.

Our newspapers read like an old-fashioned

Newsletter with their rumors of war. The spirit of all the defunct quidnuncs seems to have entered the man who makes up the telegrams for the American press. But what an impudent scoundrel Louis Napoleon is, to be sure!

Come early and come often, as they say to the voters in New York.

In great haste

Affectionately yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, July 18, 1870.

My dear Hughes, — I hope you will come hither as early as you can, for it will be vacation, and I can see more of you. And I want you to see my trees with the leaves on — especially my English elms, which I think no small beer of. I hope by the middle of August our worst heats will be over, for they began early this year. As I write the thermometer is 92 degrees.

Already I have an invitation for you from a friend of mine at Newport (our great watering-place) whom I would like you to know. It is a good place to see our people — “shoddy” and other. While you are here, I will take you to Concord and show you such lions as we have. We shall be delighted to see you and keep you as long as you can stay.

By the way, I was truly sorry not to see your

friend Mr. Lawson again. He interested me very much with his simple sincere ways. I owe you a great deal also for letting me know Stephen, whom I soon learned to love.

This war in Europe shocks me deeply. But I can now understand better than before, perhaps, the feeling of so many Englishmen about "our" war. However, I never quarrelled with the feeling, but with the brutal way in which it was expressed.

"This" war seems begun in the most wanton selfishness, and I hope that the charlatan who has ridden France for so many years will at least get his quietus. I have never credited him with any greatness but unscrupulousness, an immense advantage with five hundred thousand bayonets behind it.

I have been deeply interested in your Irish Land bill. It concerns us also, for one of the worst diseases we have to cure in the Irish who come over here is their belief that the laws are their natural enemies. Give them property (or a chance at it) in the land, *coûte qu'il coûte*. Fixity of tenure is only a palliative. It won't stand against the influences that are in the air nowadays. It was tried here on the Van Rensselaers' property in New York, and led to the "Anti-rent war." You are doing noble things, and in that practical and manly way which must always make England respectable in the eyes

of foreigners. England is the only country where things get a thorough discussion before the people and by the best men.

Good-by and God bless you till I take you by the hand. Always heartily yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, *August 13, 1870.*

My dear Hughes, — On one account alone can I say I am glad you are coming later. I hope by the time you get here it will be cooler. The three children in the furnace never saw anything worse than we have had for a month.

Of course, you must suit your plans to your change of route. All I ask is to have you here before vacation is over, September 29th. As to lecturing — the only argument in its favor is that it is the easiest way of turning an honest penny for a man who is used to speaking in public. If you should look at it from this point of view, you might easily make an interesting and instructive lecture on the labor-reform movements in England. But I would not do it under five hundred dollars a night.

I enclose a letter for you which came this morning from Mr. Forbes,<sup>1</sup> whom perhaps you saw in England. At any rate, he is a man worth knowing in every way.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. John M. Forbes.



It is very pleasant to be writing to you on this side of the water.

Quebec, by the way, is better than most things in Europe by its startling contrast; a bit of Louis Quatorze set down bodily in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The sooner you come the better, is all I have to say.

Yours always,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, August 28, 1870.

. . . I had hoped during vacation to fill some gaps in my "Cathedral," but work has been out of the question. I have read a good deal of mediæval French poetry in the way of business—and nothing more. But my hopes of freedom brighten a little. Already there are inquiries after my land, and whenever I can sell it for enough to live on modestly I shall do it. One can't write poetry unless he give his whole life to it, and I long to do something yet that shall be as good as I can. Now and then I get a bit impatient, and I fear I wrote you last winter in some such mood. But you know I am pretty reasonable, and always strive to look at myself and my fortune from another man's point of view. I do not think it so hard for a solitary to see himself as others see him; the difficult

thing is to act in accordance with your knowledge, an art I have never acquired. I believe no criticism has ever been made on what I write (I mean no just one) that I had not made before, and let slip through my fingers. . . .

The war in Europe has interested me profoundly, and if the Prussians don't win, then the laws of the great game have been changed, for a moral enthusiasm always makes battalions heavier than a courage that rises like an exhilaration from heated blood. Moreover, as against the Gaul I believe in the Teuton. And just now I *wish* to believe in him, for he represents civilization. Anything that knocks the nonsense out of Johnny Crapaud will be a blessing to the world. How like a gentleman the King of Prussia shows in his despatches alongside of that *fanfaron* Napoleon! It refreshes me wonderfully, also, to see that the French don't show the quiet front under reverses that we did, and our trial was one of years.

. . . My only news (we never have any in Cambridge, and my *cordon sanitaire* of trees secludes me from such gossip as buzzes down in the village) is a visit from Tom Hughes, who is as frank and hearty and natural a dear good fellow as could be wished. He is now at Naushon, and comes back to us on Tuesday. Wednesday we go to Concord, to dine with Hoar. Hughes will leave us sooner than I like, in order to be

back here for the laying of the corner-stone of Memorial Hall, 29th September. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, October 14, 1870.

. . . We have been having a truly delightful visit from Hughes, who was as charming as man can be — so simple, hearty, and affectionate. He was with us a fortnight, off and on, and we liked him better and better. His only fault is that he *will* keep quoting the “Biglow Papers,” which he knows vastly better than I. I was astonished to find what a heap of wisdom was accumulated in those admirable volumes. There never was an Englishman who took this country so naturally as Hughes. I was really saddened to part with him — it was saying good-by to sunshine. We have had other agreeable Britons here this autumn. Bryce I especially liked, and Hughes brought with him a very nice young Rawlins.

All summer I have been studying old French metrical romances and the like, and have done an immense deal of reading — for which I have a talent, if for nothing else. During vacation — a good part of it — I must have averaged my twelve hours a day. And the use of it all? — for some lectures which I am reading to about a score of young women twice a week during the term. Think of *me* with thirty-six lectures on my mind, and you will understand why I am

getting a little thin. . . . What good all this lumber will do me I find it hard to say. I long to give myself to poetry again before I am so old that I have only thought and no music left. I can't say, as Milton did, "I am growing my wings." I held back a copy of "The Cathedral," that I might write into it a passage or two, and now, after all, I have sent it by Theodora without them. My vein would *not* flow this summer. The heat dried up that with the other springs. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, October 15, 1870.

. . . Of course it could not but be very pleasant to me that Ruskin found something to like in "The Cathedral." There is nobody whom I would rather please, for he is catholic enough to like both Dante and Scott. I am glad to find also that the poem *sticks*. Those who liked it at first like it still, some of them better than ever, some extravagantly. At any rate, it wrote itself; all of a sudden it was *there*, and that is something in its favor. Now Ruskin wants me to go over it with the file. That is just what I did. I wrote in pencil, then copied it out in ink, and worked over it as I never worked over anything before. I may fairly say there is not a word in it over which I have not thought, not an objection which I did not foresee and

maturely consider. Well, in my second copy I made many changes, as I thought for the better, and then put it away in my desk to cool for three weeks or so. When I came to print it, I put back, I believe, *every one* of the original readings which I had changed. Those which had come to me were far better than those I had come at. Only one change I made (for the worse), in order to escape a rhyme that had crept in without my catching it.

Now for Ruskin's criticisms. As to words, I am something of a purist, though I like best the word that best says the thing. (You know I have studied lingo a little.) I am fifty-one years old, however, and have in some sense won my spurs. I claim the right now and then to knight a plebeian word for good service in the field. But it will almost always turn out that it has after all good blood in its veins, and can prove its claim to be put in the saddle. *Rote* is a familiar word all along our seaboard to express that dull and continuous burden of the sea heard inland before or after a great storm. The root of the word may be in *rumpere*, but is more likely in *rotare*, from the identity of this sea-music with that of the *rote* — a kind of hurdy-gurdy with which the jongleurs accompanied their song. It is one of those Elizabethan words which we New-Englanders have preserved along with so many others. It occurs in the "Mirror

for Magistrates," "the sea's *rote*," which Nares, not understanding, would change to *rore*! It is not to be found in any provincial glossary, but I caught it *alive* at Beverly and the Isles of Shoals. Like "mobbed queen," 't is "good."

*Whiff* Ruskin calls "an American elevation of English lower word." Not a bit of it. I have always thought "the *whiff* and wind of his fell sword" in "Hamlet" rather fine than otherwise. Ben also has the word. "Downshod" means shod with down. I doubted about this word myself—but I wanted it. As to "misgave," the older poets used it as an active verb, and I have done with it as all poets do with language. My *meaning* is clear, and that is the main point. His objection to "spume-sliding down the baffled decuman" I do not understand. I think if he will read over his "ridiculous Germanism" (p. 13 seq.) with the context he will see that he has misunderstood me. (By the way, "in our life alone doth Nature live" is Coleridge's, not Wordsworth's.) I never hesitate to say anything I have honestly felt because some one may have said it before, for it will always get a new color from the new mind, but here I was not saying the same thing by a great deal. *Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu* would be nearer, though not what I meant. Nature (inanimate), which is the image of the mind, sympathizes with all our moods.

I would have numbered the lines as Ruskin suggests, only it looks as if one valued them too much. That sort of thing should be post-humous. You may do it for me, my dear Charles, if my poems survive me. Two dropt stitches I must take up which I notice on looking over what I have written. Ruskin surely remembers Carlyle's "whiff of grapeshot." That is one. The other is that *rote* may quite as well be from the Icelandic *at hriota* = to *snore*; but my studies more and more persuade me that where there is in English a Teutonic and a Romance root meaning the same thing, the two are apt to melt into each other so as to make it hard to say from which our word comes. . . .

*To Thomas Hughes*

ELMWOOD, October 18, 1870.

My dear old Friend, — Parting with you was like saying good-by to sunshine. As I took my solitary whiff o' baccy, after I got home, my study looked bare, and my old cronies on the shelves could not make up to me for my new loss. I sat with my book on my knee and mused with a queer feeling about my eyelids now and then. And yet you have left so much behind that is precious to me, that by and by I know that my room will have a virtue in it never there before, because of your presence. And now it seems so short — a hail at sea with

a God-speed and no more. But you will come back, I am sure. We all send love and regret.

The day after you left us Rose discovered your thin coat, which she called a "duster." I had half a mind to confiscate it, it was such a good one; but on second thoughts concluded that that was, on the whole, as good a reason for sending it back as for keeping it.

Letters continue to pour in, and I enclose them with the coat to No. 9 Lexington Avenue. There came also a telegram from Montreal, which I felt justified in opening. From what you had told me, I had no doubt that you had already answered in a letter. It only said that they should expect you on Tuesday.

As you will no doubt see Bryce and Dicey in London, pray tell them how sorry I was not to see more of them. They left many friends in Cambridge. If all Englishmen could only take America so "naturally" as you did! I think, if it could be so, there would never be any risk of war. That reminds me that I am sure your address has done great good. It has set people thinking, and that is all we need. I enclose a little poem from to-day's "Advertiser" which pleased me. I do not know who "H. T. B." is, but I think his verses very sweet, and Mrs. Hughes may like to see them. I would rather have the kind of welcome that met you in this country than all the shouts of all the



crowds on the "Via Sacra" of Fame. There was "love" in it, you beloved old boy, and no man ever earns that for nothing — unless now and then from a woman. By Jove! it is worth writing books for — such a feeling as that. . . .

I am holding "Good-by" at arm's length as long as I can, but I must come to it. Give my kindest regards to Rawlins, and take all my heart yourself. God bless you! A pleasant voyage, and all well in the nest when you get back to it!

Always most affectionately yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, February 7, 1871.

My dear Friend,—That friendship should be able to endure silence without suspicion is the surest touchstone of its sufficiency. I did not expect to hear from you very soon after your return, for I knew how busy you must be in many ways. But I was none the less glad to get your letter with assurance of your welfare. I should have written you, indeed, before this, but that I have been away from home three weeks reading some lectures in Baltimore.

We are all well except Mabel's Meg, who has fallen lame. After our warm autumn, Winter, as usual, has put his screws on, and when I walk it is over five feet thick of cast iron,

for we have little snow. Several times within the last fortnight the thermometer has marked  $-8^{\circ}$  Fahrenheit. But Cambridge is odd in this respect. Owing to our ice trade the poorer people always bless a hard winter, which gives them work when other sources fail. Mild weather is always looked on as a misfortune.

I was much interested in your mutual-enlightenment scheme, though I am not at all clear as to its doing good here — I mean, whether a similar committee would be advisable on this side. Our people are so sensitively jealous just now that I fear it might arouse opposition of an ignorant sort, and so do more harm than good. I think they are settling down to a more rational view of the Alabama matter, and if you can keep the hotheads in Canada within bounds, all will go well. A very little more folly on their part would make “a pretty kettle of fish,” if I know my countrymen. Even granting the claim of the Dominion to be legally admissible (which I doubt), you can no more persuade the bulk of our people of it than you were able to convince the English peasant of the righteousness of game laws. Moreover, and this heightens the danger, our fishermen are the class which among us most nearly resembles the borderers of the West, and they are the direct descendants of the men who suffered by British impressment before 1812. They have inherited

a very bitter legacy of hatred, and might too easily be led by an unscrupulous demagogue like Butler to make reprisals. When I remember how like thunder out of a clear sky war comes nowadays, I wish to get drawn off from the atmosphere as much of the ominous electricity as may be.

I think it fortunate that Schenck (pronounced Skenk) is a Western man, because he will be free at least from any commercial animosity. He is said to be able, and he will represent an administration just now especially hostile to Sumner and his theory of constructive damages.

The Senate (who are the real arbiters after all) may be suspected of being in somewhat the same mood. Except for the fishery business, I am not inclined to agree with those who see danger in delay. Already the discussion of the law points of neutrality has brought our people to a more reasonable frame of mind about the rights and duties of neutrals. The Irish element, I think, will never affect our foreign politics — nor our domestic, for that matter, except that through New York it may turn the scale of the next national election in favor of the Democrats; but the Democrats, once in power, will be in no more danger of rushing into a war with England than the Republicans — whom office has already largely corrupted.

I still think (as I told you here) that a war would be more disastrous to us than to you, though the direst misfortune for both and for the advance of enlightened freedom.

As for the war in Europe, I am a Prussian, and believe it to be in the interest of civilization that a public bully (as France had become) should be soundly thrashed. The French will never be safe neighbors till the taint of Louis XIV. is drawn out of their blood. If the Prussian lancet shall effect this I shall rejoice. The misery I feel as keenly as anybody, but I remember that it might have been, but for German energy and courage, even worse on the other side of the Rhine. The Gaul has never been an amiable conqueror, and the Teuton has the longest historical memory among men. . . .

Elmwood expects you longingly again. With the heart's affection,

Yours always,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To J. T. Fields*

ELMWOOD, *February 11, 1871.*

. . . I am looking forward to your next instalment of Hawthorne. I read the first with great interest, and wish you would give us more rather than less, especially in extracts from his letters. We don't seem likely to get a biography, and these in some sort supply it. . . . Be

sure and don't leave out anything because it seems trifling, for it is out of these trifles only that it is possible to reconstruct character sometimes, if not always. I think your method is above criticism, and you have hit the true channel between the Charybdis of reticence and the Scylla of gossip, as Dr. Parr would have said. . . .

*To Leslie Stephen*

ELMWOOD, July 31, 1871.

. . . I have been selling my birthright for a mess of pottage, and find it so savory that I side with Esau more than ever. I don't know whether you ever suspected it (I hope you did n't—for I have noticed that you English use "beggar" as a clincher in the way of contempt), but I have been hitherto pretty well pinched for money. Our taxes are so heavy that nobody since Atlas ever carried such a burthen of real estate as I, and *he* would n't if he had been compelled to pay for it. Well, I have just (29th July was the happy date) been selling all that I held in my own right for enough to give me about \$5000 a year and Mabel about \$1400 more. This is n't much, according to present standards, but is as much as I want. It is a life-preserver that will keep my head above water, and the swimming I will do for myself. Then, I am going to have

Elmwood divided. It is a bitter dose, but I have made up my mind to it, and make myself believe that I shall like the house with a couple of acres as well as I do now with twelve times as much. The city has crept up to me, curbstones are feeling after and swooping upon the green edges of the roads, and the calf I used to carry is grown to a bull. I have gone over to the enemy and become a capitalist. I denounce the Commune with the best of them, and find it extremely natural that I should be *natus consumere fruges* — which means that I shall now grow consumedly frugal. I have weighed out the reasons (so far as I could decipher them) which you give me for coming over, and think them excellent — especially does your lavish offer of five shillings to sit in a certain chair weigh with me, and I shall certainly claim it. The reasons I could n't read (for you became particularly runic or cuneiform or something worse in this passage) I took to be of some loving sort or other, and reciprocate them heartily. If everything goes well I mean to go abroad in a year from last June — that is, at the end of our next college year, and if I do, you will see a youth you never saw before. Property, sir, is the Ponce-de-Leon fountain of youth. I am already regenerate. I am the master of forty legions. I will kick the vizier's daughter, my wife, for a constitutional. And

now cometh L. S. (I relish your initials now, and mentally add a D. to them), and prayeth that I would write some verses for his magazine!<sup>1</sup> I am given to understand by several gentlemen in easy circumstances (with whom I discuss the prices of stocks and the dangers of universal suffrage) that poets are notorious for nothing so much as the smallness of their balance at the banker's. Is there no danger of my losing caste by meddling in such matters — I who am casting about where I can steal a railway and share with Jem Fisk the applauses of my grateful countrymen? Bethink yourself, my dear Stephen. Put yourself for a moment in my position. I have a great affection for you, and shall lay it to the small experience of the world natural to the remote corner in which you dwell. I have no doubt it was kindly meant. A few Latin versicles, fruits of an elegant leisure, I might send you perhaps — but English — I must ask Vanderbilt's opinion. I will bear it in mind.

I should have sent "My Study Windows" (a hateful name, forced upon me by the publishers), but was waiting for a new edition, in which the misprints are corrected. I quite agree with you about Carlyle, and perhaps was harder on him than I meant, because I was fighting

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Stephen had lately become editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*.

against a secret partiality. I go off also in a day or two on a fishing jaunt, to get rid of a pain in the head that has been bothering me. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, *September 5, 1871.*

. . . Yesterday, as I was walking down the Beacon Street mall, the yellowing leaves were dozily drifting from the trees, and the sentiment of autumn was in all the air, though the day, despite an easterly breeze, was sultry. I enjoyed the laziness of everything to the core, and sauntered as idly as a thistledown, thinking with a pleasurable twinge of sympathy that the fall was beginning for me also, and that the buds of next season were pushing our stems from their hold on the ever-renewing tree of Life. I am getting to be an old fellow, and my sheaves are not so many as I hoped; but I am outwardly more prosperous than ever before — indeed, than ever I dreamed of being. If none of my stays give way, I shall have a clear income of over four thousand a year, with a house over my head, and a great heap of what I have always found the best fertilizer of the mind — leisure. I cannot tell you how this sense of my regained paradise of Independence enlivens me. It is something I have not felt for years — hardly since I have been a professor. . . . Meanwhile I am getting a kind of fame — though I never







valued *that*, as you know — and what is better, a certain respect as a man of some solid qualities, which I *do* value highly. I have always believed that a man's fate is born with him, and that he cannot escape from it nor greatly modify it, and that consequently every one gets in the long run exactly what he deserves, neither more nor less. At any rate, this is a cheerful creed, and enables one to sleep soundly in the very shadow of Miltiades' trophy. What I said long ago is literally true, that it is only for the sake of those who believed in us early that we desire the verdict of the world in our favor. It is the natural point of honor to hold our endorsers harmless. . . . It is always my happiest thought that with all the drawbacks of temperament (of which no one is more keenly conscious than myself) I have never lost a friend. For I would rather be loved than anything else in the world. I always thirst after affection, and depend more on the expression of it than is altogether wise. And yet I leave the letters of those I love unanswered so long! It is because the habits of authorship are fatal to the careless unconsciousness that is the life of a letter, and still more, in my case, that I have always something on my mind — an uneasy sense of disagreeable duties to come, which I cannot shake myself free from. But worse than all is that lack of interest in one's self that comes of drudgery,

for I hold that a letter which is not mainly about the writer of it lacks the prime flavor. The wine must smack a little of the cask. You will recognize the taste of my old wood in this! . . .

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, *December 20, 1871.*

My dear Godkin, — I have n't looked into Taine's book since it first appeared seven years ago, and as I had no thought of reviewing it, I find that I did not mark it as I read. To write a competent review I should have to read it all through again, for which I have neither the time nor the head just now. I have just been writing about Masson's "Life of Milton," for the "North American," and the result has convinced me that my brain is softening. You are the only man I know who carries his head perfectly steady, and I find myself so thoroughly agreeing with the "Nation" always that I am half persuaded I edit it myself! Or rather, you always say what I would have said — if I had only thought of it.

I am thinking of coming on to New York for a day or two next week, to see you and a few other friends. Somehow my youth is revived in me, and I have a great longing for an hour or two in Page's studio, to convince me that I am really only twenty-four, as I seem to myself. So

get ready to be jolly, for I mean to bring a spare trunk full of good spirits with me and to forget that I have ever been professor or author or any other kind of nuisance. Just as I was in fancy kicking off my ball and chain, a glance at the clock tells me I must run down to College! But when I come to New York (since I can't get rid of them) I shall wear 'em as a breastpin. I have seen some nearly as large. Dickens had one when I first saw him in '42. Give my kindest regards to Mrs. Godkin.

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

Give Schenck another shot. Also say something on the queer notion of the Republican party that they can get along without their brains. "Time was that when the brains were out the man would *die*," but *nous avons changé tout cela*.

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, December 21, 1871.

. . . You forget that I know Dresden better than any other city except Rome, and I wish to know whether you are in the Altstadt or the Neustadt, and in what part of either, that I may figure you to myself the more comfortably. Is the theatre rebuilt? Are the Schloss and the Japanische Palast in their old places? Does the

sandstone statue of the reforming Elector still keep watch and ward at the corner of the little garden on which my room opened, where I heard the first European thrush, and had my daily breakfast-party of sparrows? Is there still a *Victoria regia* in the little greenhouse? Are there yellow-coated chairmen yet? And do the linkmen run before the royal coaches at night? And will the postman who brings you this wear a scarlet jacket as he should? And is it dreadfully cold, and do you worry yourself every morning by reducing Réaumur to Fahrenheit before you know how cold you can conscientiously feel? Dear me, how I should like to be over there just for an hour on Christmas eve, to stroll about with you and see again the prettiest sight I ever saw — the innocent jollity in the houses of the poor, and the dancing shadows of the children round the frugal Christmas-tree!

Here we are having winter in earnest. Thermometer four below zero this morning, and the whole earth shining in the sun like the garments of the saints at the Resurrection. Presently I shall walk down to the village to post this and drink a beaker full of the northwest — the true elixir of good spirits. . . .

George Curtis has just sent in his report on the Civil Service, and I expect much good from it. A man like him who knows the value of moderation, and who can be perfectly firm in his

own opinions without stroking those of everybody else against the fur, was sure to do the right thing. I am glad his name will be associated with so excellent a reform. He deserved it. . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, February 17, 1872.

. . . Everything goes on here as usual. Three times a week I have my classes, one in Nannucci, "Letteratura del Primo Secolo," the other in Bartsch, "Chrestomathie de l'Ancien Français." On Wednesdays I have besides a University class, with whom I have read the "Chanson de Roland," and am now reading the "Roman de la Rose." On my off-days, the first thing in the morning I go over my work for the next day, and then renew my reading of Old French. The only modern book I have read for a long while is Comte Gobineau's "La Philosophie et les Religions de l'Asie Centrale," which I think one of the most interesting works I ever read. It tells you a great deal you did not know, and in a very lively way. If you have not read it I advise you to do so forthwith. . . .

. . . As for my being in low spirits, I haven't been so this long while. I thought it was constitutional with me, but since I have had no pecuniary anxieties I am as light as a bird. No,

you are quite right; you would n't suspect it from my letters. But, my dear Jane, it takes a good while to slough off the effect of seventeen years of pedagogy. I am grown learned (after a fashion) and dull. The lead has entered into my soul. But I have great faith in putting the sea between me and the stocks I have been sitting in so long. . . .

*To F. H. Underwood*

ELMWOOD, May 12, 1872.

. . . Don't bother yourself with any sympathy for me under my supposed sufferings from critics. I don't need it in the least. If a man does anything good, the world always finds it out, sooner or later; and if he does n't, why, the world finds *that* out too — and ought to. . . .

'Gainst monkey's claws and ass's hoof  
My studies forge me mail of proof.  
I climb through paths forever new  
To purer air and broader view.  
What matter though they should efface,  
So far below, my footstep's trace?

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, July 2, 1872.

. . . We have had Commencement week, too, but I saw little of it, being hard at work all the while upon an article about Dante, with



Miss Rossetti's book for a text. I have not made so much of it as I should if my time had been less broken. As it was, I had to keep the press going from day to day. Charles will smile at this, remembering his editorial experience of me. . . .

We sail in a week from to-day, and I have as yet no plans. J. H. goes with us! Frank Parkman and Henry Adams are also fellow-passengers, so that we shall have a pleasant ship's company. We shall contrive to meet you *somewhere*, you may be sure. Write to care of Barings whether you are still at St. Germain. I associate the name pleasantly with the old homonymous pear which used to be in our garden. . . .

## VII

1872-1876

*Visit to Europe: England, Residence in Paris, Italy, Paris, England. — Honorary degree from Oxford. — Elegy on Agassiz. — Return to Elmwood. — Resumption of professorial duties. — Centennial poems at Concord and Cambridge. — "Among my Books," Second Series. — Entrance into political life. — Delegate to the National Republican Convention. — Presidential elector.*

*Letters to Miss Grace Norton, George Putnam, Miss Norton, Thomas Hughes, C. E. Norton, Leslie Stephen, E. L. Godkin, T. B. Aldrich, Mrs. L. A. Stimson, W. D. Howells, T. S. Perry, Mrs. S. B. Herrick, J. W. Field, R. S. Chilton, R. W. Gilder, Joel Benton, E. P. Bliss, H. W. Longfellow.*

### *To Miss Grace Norton*

11 DOWN STREET, PICCADILLY, August 4, 1872.

. . . Our voyage was as smooth as the style of the late Mr. Samuel Rogers of happy memory. . . . We landed at Queenstown on the morning of the eleventh day out. . . .

Dublin interested me much. I can describe it in one word by calling it Hogarthian. I walked pretty well over it while there, and was contin-

ually struck with its last-century look. I saw even a genuine Tom O'Bedlam one day. Beggars are as thick as in Italy and quite as pertinacious. One pretty little scene I shall never forget. It was a drizzly day, and the sidewalks were covered with a slippery black paste. Near the Tholsel (City Hall) sat a woman on some steps nursing her baby, and in front of her a ring of barefoot children (the oldest not more than five years) were dancing round a little tot who stood bewildered in the middle, and singing as they whirled hand in hand. They were as dirty and as rosy and as ragged as could be, and as pretty as one of Richter's groups. The ballad-singer with her baby and lugubrious song I met several times. At the National Gallery we saw a portrait by Moroni as good as anything south of the Alps, and at the National Exhibition lots of Irish portraits and other interesting things. I went to the library of Trinity College, where the librarian, Dr. Malet, was very civil, and promised to send some books to the good old Sibley.<sup>1</sup> I was interested in the College as being Godkin's, whom I celebrated to Dr. Malet, you may be sure. From Dublin to Chester, where we stayed five days, and where Charles Kingsley (who is a canon there) was very kind. We had the advantage of going over the Cathedral with him, and over the town with the chief

<sup>1</sup> The Librarian of Harvard University.

local antiquary. We fell quite in love with it and with the delightful walk round the walls. We arrived in London night before last. . . .

Affectionately yours,

LLUMBAGO LLOWELL.

*To Miss Norton*

11 DOWN STREET, PICCADILLY, *August 19, 1872.*

. . . I do not mean to say that I am not enjoying myself. I suppose I *am*, in an indolent kind of fashion, but I caught myself being homesick before I had been a week in England. Some little solace I got out of an Anglo-Norman poem which I picked up here, and I can't help laughing when I think of it. So, then, my nature, like a dyer's hand, *has* been subdued to what it has been working in, and the curious dulness I am sensible of in myself is a fair standard of how much there must be in the literature whence I drew it. It worries me, though, this slowness. You have always laughed at me when I talked about it, but what I said of myself years ago (I could not say anything so smart now) — that I had been altered from percussion to flint—is perfectly true.

Something you say in your letter puts me in mind of what I always thought one of the most truly pathetic passages in all literature. I mean that in which Froissart, after devoting a chapter to the praises of the Queen (I forget her name)

who had been his patroness, seems to bethink himself, and rousing from his reverie with a sigh, begins his next chapter by saying, "There is no death which we must not get over," or something to that effect. Whether he meant just that or not, there is nothing sadder, nothing we resent so much, as the necessity of being distracted and consoled. I fear I have quoted this to you before, it comes up to my mind so often. I wish I could recollect the Queen's name. But I never can. And this the more persuades me of my unfitness to be a professor, whose main business it is to remember names and to be cocksure of dates. I can't for my life tell you (without going to my books) who it was that first alternated male and female rhymes in French alexandrine verse, nor whether he hit upon this clever scheme for setting the French Muse in the stocks towards the close of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century. Is n't there a pretty professor! Anyhow, the said Muse has sat there ever since! Béranger cheered her up with a bottle of claret, and de Musset gave her a kind of wicked inspiration with *absinthe*; but there she sits, and all owing to this wretch whose name I can't recall. Am I the right sort of man to guide ingenuous youth? Not a bit of it! . . .

Tell Charles the article on Dante was written in all the distraction of getting away, with

the thermometer at 95°, and keeping abreast of the printers, so that I could not arrange and revise properly. I am glad he found anything in it. . . .

Good-by, my dear woman, for a few days. By Jove, is n't it pleasant to be able to say that? For a *few days*, mind you. It was years, a month ago. . . .

Yours most everything always,  
J. R. L.

*To C. E. Norton*

Hôtel de Lorraine, No. 7 Rue de Beaune  
PARIS, December 4, 1872.

. . . Oddly enough when I got your letter about Tennyson's poem I had just finished reading a *real* Arthurian romance — "Fergus" — not one of the best, certainly, but having that merit of being a genuine blossom for which no triumph of artifice can compensate; having, in short, that *woodsy* hint and tantalization of perfume which is so infinitely better than anything more defined. Emerson had left me Tennyson's book; so last night I took it to bed with me and finished it at a gulp, reading like a naughty boy till half past one. The contrast between his pomp and my old rhymers' simplicity was very curious and even instructive. One bit of the latter (which I cannot recollect elsewhere) amused me a good deal as a Yankee.

When Fergus comes to Arthur's court and Sir Kay "sarses" him (which, you know, is *de rigueur* in the old poems), Sir Gawain saunters up *whittling a stick* as a medicine against ennui. So afterwards, when Arthur is dreadfully bored by hearing no news of Fergus, he reclines at table without any taste for his dinner, and whittles to purge his heart of melancholy. I suppose a modern poet would not dare to come so near Nature as this lest she should fling up her heels. But I am not yet "aff wi' the auld love," nor quite "on with the new." There are very fine childish things in Tennyson's poem and fine manly things, too, as it seems to me, but I conceive the theory to be wrong. I have the same feeling (I am not wholly sure of its justice) that I have when I see these modern-mediæval pictures. I am defrauded; I do not see reality, but a masquerade. The costumes are all that is genuine, and the people inside them are shams — which, I take it, is just the reverse of what ought to be. One special criticism I should make on Tennyson's new Idyls, and that is that the similes are so often dragged in by the hair. They seem to be taken (*à la* Tom Moore) from note-books, and not suggested by the quickened sense of association in the glow of composition. Sometimes it almost seems as if the verses were made for the similes, instead of being the cresting of a wave that heightens as it

rolls. This is analogous to the costume objection and springs perhaps from the same cause — the making of poetry with malice prepense. However, I am not going to forget the lovely things that Tennyson has written, and I think they give him rather hard measure now. However, it is the natural recoil of a too rapid fame. Wordsworth had the true kind — an unpopularity that roused and stimulated while he was strong enough to despise it, and honor, obedience, troops of friends, when the grasshopper would have been a burthen to the drooping shoulders. Tennyson, to be sure, has been childishly petulant; but what have these whipper-snappers, who cry “Go up, baldhead,” done that can be named with some things of his? He has been the greatest artist in words we have had since Gray — and remember how Gray holds his own with little fuel, but real fire. He had the secret of the inconsumable oil, and so, I fancy, has Tennyson.

I keep on picking up books here and there, but I shall be forced to stop, for I find I have got beyond my income. Still, I shall try gradually to make my Old French and Provençal collection tolerably complete, for the temptation is great where the field is definitely bounded. . . .



*To George Putnam*

Hôtel de Lorraine, No. 7 Rue de Beaune,  
PARIS, December 12, 1872.

My dear Putnam, — . . . We are still at the same little hotel, and like it better and better. It is really being in foreign parts, for everybody is French but ourselves, and we are become a part of the household, so that night before last in the gale it was our *haut de cheminée* that came rattling down.

We like the people very much. They are kindly and honest, and we think we shall stay a month or two longer. It will be wise, for if I stay so long my income will overtake me. It is a little out of breath just now — but then I have got some books (all in Old French and Provençal) which will be a revenue to me so long as I live. We are too near the quays, where all the *bouquinistes* spin their webs. We are threatened with a kind of mild revolution (an inoculated one), but I doubt. I think the Right must keep on with Thiers, and that even had they the courage for a *coup-d'état*, he would outgeneral them. But, after all, *en France tout arrive*, and the French are the most wonderful creatures for talking wisely and acting foolishly I ever saw. However, I like Paris, and am beginning to be glad I came abroad. . . .

To C. E. Norton

PARIS, January 11, 1873.

My dear Charles, — . . . I begin to foresee that I shall not stay abroad so long as I expected. I thought I was all right now, but as usual my income is never so large as my auguries. Fortunately, I like Cambridge better than any other spot of the earth's surface, and if I can only manage to live there, shall be at ease yet. *Inveni portum, spes et fortuna, valete; sat me lusistis, ludite jam alios!* That's what I shall say — at least I hope so. . . .

Paris, old Mr. Sales said, was not exactly the place for deacons. Nor is it for poets. However, no place is where one only perches. I cannot contrive the right kind of solitude, and if I compose as I walk about I shall be run over. I made out a sonnet day before yesterday, which, as I composed it expressly for you, I shall send to its address; though its merit lies mainly in the sentiment and not (as it should be with a sonnet) in the execution. But I am getting as bad with my prelude as the band in a penny show, and you will begin to expect something wonderful if I don't give you the thing at once.

P. S. I conceived it in Cumberland.

As sinks the sun behind yon alien hills,  
Whose heather-purpled slopes in glory rolled  
Flush all my thought with momentary gold,

What pang of vague regret my fancy thrills?  
Here 't is enchanted ground the peasant tills,  
Where the shy ballad could its leaves unfold,  
And Memory's glamour makes new sights seem old,  
As when our life some vanished dream fulfils.  
Yet not to you belong these painless tears,  
Land loved ere seen ; before my darkened eyes,  
From far beyond the waters and the years,  
Horizons mute that wait their poet rise ;  
The stream before me fades and disappears,  
And in the Charles the western splendor dies.

I have hardly expressed the strange feeling of ideal familiarity vexed with a longing for something visibly intimate. But I miss my *old* Solitude, and if Memory be the mother of the Muses, this lonely lady is their maiden aunt who always has gifts for them in her cupboard when they visit her. However, I have a poem or two in my head which I hope will come to something one of these days. The theme of one of them is pretty enough. To the cradle of Garin come the three fairies. One gives him beauty, one power, and the third misfortune. Grown an old, old man, he sits in the courtyard of the palace he has conquered from the Saracens, and muses over his past life to the murmur of the fountain, which sings to him as it did to its old lords, and as it will to the new after he is gone. As he reckons up what is left him as the result of the three gifts, what is really a possession of the soul, what has turned the

soft fibre of gifts to the hard muscle of character, he comes to the conclusion that the third fairy, whom his parents would fain have kept away or propitiated, was the beneficent one.

I have seen nothing new except the Duc d'Aumale, whom I met the other night at the Laugels'. I had, of course, only a few moments' commonplace talk with him. As a general thing, I like men vastly better than dukes, though where the two qualities are united, as in him, I am willing to encounter the product. He is a *distingué* person in a high sense, with a real genius for looking like a gentleman. I was pleased to see how much might be done by *breeding*, and how effective the result is—greater in some respects than that of great natural parts. It was good to see so pure a face in the grandson of Egalité and great-grandson of the Regent. There is hope, then, for the most degraded races, and Whitefriars may contain the ancestors of saints and heroes. One thing struck me particularly, and made our Americanism (which weighs a man honestly, without throwing in the bones of his ancestors) dearer to me. Nobody, I could see, was quite at ease with the duke, nor he with anybody. There was something unnatural in the relation, a dimly defined sense of anachronism, something of what a dog might feel in the company of a tame wolf. The more I see of the old

world, the better I like the new. I am disgusted to see how the papers are willing to overlook the crimes and the essential littleness of Napoleon III., simply because he has had the wit to die, a stroke of genius within reach of us all. However, I was long ago convinced that one of the rarest things in the world was a real opinion based on judgment and unshakable by events. The *clamor civium prava laudantium* is as bad as that of the *jubentium*. . . .

Always most lovingly yours, J. R. L.

*To Miss Norton*

PARIS, March 4, 1873.

. . . We have enjoyed our winter here on the whole very much, and have really learned something of the French and their ways — more than ten years on the other side of the river would have done for us. The French are fearfully and wonderfully made in some respects, but I like them and their pretty ways. It is a positive pleasure (after home experiences, where one has to pad himself all over against the rude elbowing of life) to go and buy a cigar. It is an affair of the highest and most gracious diplomacy, and we spend more *monsieurs* and *madames* upon it than would supply all the traffic of Cambridge for a half century. It is a good drill, for I have always been of the mind that in a democracy manners are the only effective weapons against

the bowie-knife, the only thing that will save us from barbarism. Our little hotel is very pleasant in its way, and its *clientèle* is of the most respectable. . . . I can't remember whether I told Charles that one of our convives turned out to be a gentleman who had lived many years in Finland, and had translated into French my favorite "Kalewala." He tells me that the Finns recite their poems six or seven hours on the stretch, *spelling* one another, as we say in New England. This would make easily possible the recitation of a poem like the "Roland," for example, or of one even much longer. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

PARIS, March 18, 1873.

. . . The Emersons are back with us, to our great satisfaction, and yesterday I took him to the top of the tower of Notre Dame, and played the part of Satan very well, I hope, showing him all the kingdoms of this world. A very pleasant walk we had of it. He grows sweeter if possible as he grows older. He had a prosperous Egyptian journey. . . . He told us a droll story of Alcott last night. He asked the Brahmin what he had to show for himself, what he had *done*, in short, to justify his having been on the earth. "If Pythagoras came to Concord whom would he ask to see?" demanded the accused triumphantly. . . .

*To Thomas Hughes*

PARIS, March 19, 1873.

My dear Friend, — First, of what interests me most. The day I got your book<sup>1</sup> the Emersons came back from the crocodiles and pyramids and fleas. So I could not get at it so soon as I would. But I began it in the hour before dinner, and at last, when everybody had gone to bed, I sat up (like a naughty boy) till half past one and read every word of it, even including my own verses, which had a kind of sweetness for me because you liked them. It interested me very much, and I quite fell in love with your father, who seems to me to have been a model of good sense and that manliness which it is perhaps our weakness to limit by calling it gentle-manliness. I see where you got a great deal of what I love in you. I wish your brother had done more, and I confess (though it is awkward) that I would rather have had your life (but for a single tragic contingency) than his. I did, to be sure, get a part of it. But I was touched especially and inspired with the glimpse I got of the affection and unity of your household. Your preface came to me just at the right moment, when I was saddened by the news from home, above all, with the fact that the average public opinion of the country did not seem to

<sup>1</sup> The book was *Memoir of a Brother*.

be higher than the personal sense of duty of its representatives. What you say of the quiet lives that would come to the front in England in a time of stress I believe to be true of us also. I cannot think such a character as Emerson's — one of the simplest and noblest I have ever known — a freak of chance, and I hope that my feeling that the country is growing worse is nothing more than men of my age have always felt when they looked back to the *tempus actum*. I think that this book of yours also, like all your others, will do a great deal of good and add to the number of honest men in the world. The longer I live (you will see or divine the subtle thread of association) the less I wonder that men make much of soldiers. The Romans were right when they lumped together manhood, courage, and virtue in the single word *virtus*. What profounder moral than that their descendants should express by the word *virtù* the contents of a shop where second-hand shreds and fragments of old housekeeping fashions are sold?

As for the degree, read Charles Lamb's sonnet on visiting Oxford and you will see how I feel. I would take a much longer journey for the sake of feeling even a son-in-law's right in that ancient household of scholarship and pluck. I believe I care very little for decorations, but I should prize this not only abstractly, but be-



cause it would give more "power to my elbow," as Paddy says, at home. How it would have pleased my father! But I shall not be a bit disappointed if I do not get it, and shall always count myself a D. C. L. so far as you are concerned.

We had a good laugh over the woodcut on the cover of my book. The one inside is a very good copy of the photograph, though it does not, I fancy, look much like me. Madame pronounces it dreadful. Luckily, I have the skin of a rhinoceros in this regard, and have never sloughed off the wholesome effect of having been brought up to consider myself visible to the naked eye, in other words plain. What a frank creature the sun is, to be sure, as an artist! He would almost take the nonsense out of a Frenchman.

If I had dreamed you would have run over to Paris, would n't I have told you where I was! But, in fact, I have lingered on here from week to week aimlessly, having come abroad to do nothing, and having thus far succeeded admirably.

So far as I understood your "differ"<sup>1</sup> with

<sup>1</sup> My supporters at Frome, which borough I then represented, had passed resolutions in favor of disestablishing the Church and against coöperation, having been visited by the agents of the Liberation Society and the Trades' Protection Society, and I had refused to vote for disestablishment or for

your electors I thought you were right. I doubt if it be time yet to give up the Church of England, or indeed to cut rashly any cable that anchors you to your historical past. If I am wanted in England I will be with you at Easter.

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

*To Leslie Stephen*

PARIS, April 29, 1873.

My dear Stephen, — Behold me now these six months, like Napoleon the First, buried here on the banks of the Seine, in the midst of that French people whom I love so well. I ought to have answered your kind letter long ago, but I have delayed from day to day till I could tell you something definite about my plans. But somehow or other I find it harder and harder to have any plans. Mine host has mixed nepenthe with his wine, or mandragora, that takes the reason prisoner. But I think I have made up my mind to run over to London for a day or two to bid the Nortons good-by, for I cannot bear to have the sea between us before I see them again. If I do, I shall arrive about the 7th of May, and I shall count on seeing

any measure limiting the right to associate for any lawful purpose. — T. H.

you as much as possible. It will depend very much on whether I can find a good perch for Mrs. Lowell when I am gone, for she is not in condition just now for so long a journey, though not in any sense ill. As for me, I am grown more fat than bard beseems, but have had a continual bother with my eyes — now better, now worse, but on the whole staying worse. Three days ago I thought I was all right, and this morning my left eye is as bad as ever. A good reason this for going over to England, for you will always be to me as good a sight for *sair een* as anything I can think of. I have an eyeglass swinging at my neck like the albatross (indeed, I am getting to be a tolerably ancient mariner by this time), but it is only a bother to me. So I have to give up the old-age theory and drift in the ocean of conjecture.

However, with all drawbacks I have had a pleasant winter, and have at least pretty well shaken myself clear of one of my pet antipathies. I have even learnt to like the French after a fashion, but it is curious to me that I like and dislike them with nothing of the intensity which I feel towards Americans and English. I feel, always unconsciously, that they are a different breed, for whom I am in no way responsible. In the other case, a sense of common blood and partnership makes attraction easier and repulsion more instinctive. I watch

these people as Mr. Darwin might his distant relations in a menagerie. Their tricks amuse me, and I am not altogether surprised when they remind me of "folks," as we say in New England. I don't believe they will make their *République* (a very different thing from a republic, by the way) march, for every one of them wants to squat on the upper bar and to snatch the nuts from his fellows. *Esprit* is their ruin, and an epigram has with them twice the force of an argument. However, I have learned to like them, which is a great comfort, and to see that they have some qualities we might borrow to advantage.

I have read your "Are We Christians?" and liked it, of course, because I found *you* in it, and that is something that will be dear to me so long as I keep my wits. I think I should say that you lump *shams* and *conventions* too solidly together in a common condemnation. All conventions are not shams by a good deal, and we should soon be Papuans without them. But I dare say I have misunderstood you. I am curious to see your brother's book, which, from some extracts I have read, I think will suit me very well. What I saw was good old-fashioned sense, and would have tickled Dr. Johnson. I should find it hard to say why I dislike John Stuart Mill, but I have an instinct that he has done lots of harm.

I hope you have seen something of Emerson, who is as sweet and wholesome as an Indian-summer afternoon. We had nearly three weeks of him here, to my great satisfaction. . . .

I remain as always

Most heartily and affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

*To C. E. Norton*

PARIS, May 1, 1873.

. . . I think I shall get some good out of it (my laziness) one of these days, for I am pleased to find that my dreams have recovered their tone and are getting as fanciful as they used to be before I was twenty-five. So I don't mind the circumference of my waist. The other night I heard a peasant girl in the ruins of a castle sing an old French ballad that would have been worth a thousand pound if I could have pieced it together again when I awoke. What bit I could recall satisfied me that it was not one of those tricks that sleep puts on us sometimes. I have seen the Delectable Mountains, too, several times, to my great comfort, for I began to believe myself fairly stalled in the slough of middle age. Montaigne called himself an old man at forty-seven, and I am fifty-four!

Our last expedition was down the Seine in the steamboat to Suresnes, which despite a leaden day was delightful. Spring is a never-

failing medicine with me. Something or other within us pushes and revives with the season, and the first song of a bird sums up all the past happiness of life, all its past sorrow too, with a passion of regret that is sweeter than any happiness. The spring here is very lovely. The tender and translucent green of the leaves, their dream of summer, as it were, lasts longer than with us, where they become mere business arrangements for getting grub out of the blue air before they are out of their teens.

I look forward to having two or three real days with you. I have n't got the groove of the collar out of my neck yet, but I am a little freer in mind than when you were here. However, we shall see. I *think* I am not so dull as then.

J. H. came back to us day before yesterday, after a month in Italy, where he did not much enjoy himself. He says that he has become a thorough *misoscopist*, or hater of sights. He goes home in June, and I shall miss him more than I like to think. . . .

*To T. B. Aldrich*

PARIS, May 28, 1873.

My dear Aldrich, — I have been so busy lately with doing nothing (which on the whole demands more time, patience, and attention than any other business) that I have failed to answer

your very pleasant letter of I don't know how long ago.

What you say about William amused me much.<sup>1</sup> You know there is a proverb that "service is no inheritance," but it was invented by the radical opposition — by some servant, that is, who was asking for higher wages. My relation with William realized the saying in an inverse sense, for I received him from my father, already partly formed by an easy master, and have, I think, pretty well finished his education. I believe I fled to Europe partly to escape his tyranny, and I am sure he is awaiting the return of his vassal to reënter on all the feudal privileges which belong of right to his class in a country so admirably free as ours. He had all the more purchase upon me that his wife had been in our service before he was, so that he knew all my weak points beforehand. Nevertheless, he has been an excellent servant, diligent, sober, and systematic, and I have no doubt I shall end my days as his milch cow if the udders of my purse continue to have a drop in them. You would see his worst side. He has eyes all round his head for the main chance; but anybody would take advantage of *me*, and I prefer the shearer to whom I am wonted, who clips close, to be sure, but has skill enough to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Aldrich was occupying Elmwood during Lowell's absence. "William" was the old factotum of the place.

spare the skin. He saves me trouble, and that is a saving I would rather buy dear than any other. Beyond meat and drink, it is the only use I have ever discovered for money — unless you give it away, which is apt to breed enemies. You will forgive my saying that I feel a certain grain of pleasure (with the safe moat of ocean between) in thinking of you in your unequal struggle with Wilhelmus Conquestor.

It gives me a very odd feeling to receive a letter dated at Elmwood from anybody whose name is n't Lowell. I used to have a strange fancy when I came home late at night that I might find my double seated in my chair, and how should I prove my identity? Your letter revived it. I can see my study so plainly as I sit here, but I find it hard to fill my chair with anybody but myself. By the way, the study table was made of some old mahogany ones that came from Portsmouth — only I gave it to be done by a man in want of work, and of course the cheap-looking affair which affronts your eyes. 'T was too bad, for the wood was priceless. You may have dined at it in some former generation. It is a pleasant old house, is n't it? Does n't elbow one, as it were. It will make a frightful conservative of you before you know it. It was born a Tory and will die so. Don't get too used to it. I often wish I



had not grown into it so. I am not happy anywhere else.

I am glad to hear you are writing a novel. Get it all done before you begin to print. Serials have been the bane of literature. There is no more good ship-building. But I draw a good augury from your letter. You had the strength of mind to leave off at the end of your third page, though I would readily have forgiven you the fourth. This is a rare virtue, and if you will but write your book on the same principle of leaving off when you have done, I am sure I shall be glad to read it.

I shall stay out my two years, though personally I would rather be at home. In certain ways this side is more agreeable to my tastes than the other; but even the buttercups stare at me as a stranger and the birds have a foreign accent. I'll be hanged but the very clouds put on strange looks to thwart me, and turn the cold shoulder on me. However, I have learned to know and like the French during my nine months' stay among them.

I am sorry to hear they stole your fruit. It gave me a sensible pang, for the trees I have planted are part of myself, and I feel the furtive evulsion of every pear even at this distance. Get a dog. He will eat up all your chickens, keep you awake all moonlight nights, and root up all your flowers, but he will make you feel

safe about your pears till they have been made booty of. Study the book of Job. It supplies one with admirable formulas of impatience, and in that way serves to reconcile one to his lot. To learn patience read the works of A. H. K. B.

Give my love to Howells when you see him, and tell him that as he is pretty busy he will easily find time to write to me. I suppose he is in his new house by this time. And Bartlett's house? I shan't know my Cambridge when I come back to it. Are you annexed yet? Before this reaches you I shall have been over to Oxford to get a D. C. L. So by the time you get it this will be the letter of a Doctor and entitled to the more respect. Perhaps, in order to get the full flavor, you had better read this passage first if you happen to think of it. Do you not detect a certain flavor of parchment and Civil Law?

Mrs. Lowell joins me in kind regards to Mrs. Aldrich and yourself — and I am always

Yours cordially,

J. R. L.

P. S. I have kept this back for the Brest steamer, which saves me fourteen cents postage. We leave Paris in a day or two. I have learned to like it and the French, which is a great gain. We have had a very pleasant winter here in the

most French of hotels. But Cambridge is better, as the rivers of Damascus were better than Jordan. There is no place like it, no, not even for taxes! I am getting gray and fat — about  $\frac{1}{2}$  as large as Howells.

*To Thomas Hughes*

PARIS, June 2, 1873.

My dear Friend, — If I am not wise enough for a Doctorate, the fault will be yours. The cap is about to fall on my head, and you are chiefly to be thanked for it. I am as pleased as Punch at the thought of having a kind of denizenship, if nothing more, at Oxford; for though the two countries insist on misunderstanding each other, I can't conceive why the sensible men on both sides should n't in time bring 'em to see the madness of their ways. Born on the edge of a University town, I have a proper respect for academical decorations, and I am provoked that I must wait till 1875 before I see myself in our triennial catalogue with "D. C. L. Oxon." at my tail. If I don't know much Roman law, I shall at least endeavor to do credit to my new title by being as civil as an orange to all mankind. Mr. Bernard has been good enough to invite me to stay with him during my visit to Oxford, so I am sure to be in good hands. I do not know whether you old Oxonians attend the University festivals or not, but I shall

not feel properly Doctored unless you are to the fore. My visit will be a flying one at best, for I shall leave Mrs. Lowell at Bruges.

My last trip to England did me good. My eyes — whether it was the friends I saw or no I can't say — have been better ever since. England looked so lovely after France, though I can't yet quite make out why. But the land of the Gauls has the advantage that one can live on his income there.

We have had a revolution since I saw you — not so much of a one as your papers in England seem to think, however. The conservatives never had any intention of making a president of the Duc d'Aumale, and though I never make prophecies, yet I am sure their present intention (as it is their only good policy) is to keep things steady as they are. But you remember how the great Julius begins — *Omnis divisa est Gallia in partes tres*. That is, into three parties — monarchists, Bonapartists, and republicans, who have to pull together for their own ends, and therefore, whether they will or no, must help the conservative republic. Henri V. is out of the question, and the radical republic equally so — I mean as a thing that could endure. Meanwhile the legitimists are a drag on the Orleanists, and whatever Bonapartism there is among the masses means merely a longing for order and peace. Whatever government can

secure these for a year or two will become the residuary legatee of the Empire.

I think it was the egotism of Thiers that overset him rather than any policy he was supposed to have, and I look on the peacefulness of the late change as a most hopeful augury for France. I believe in the bewildering force of names, but I believe also that things carry it in the long run. The French are a frugal, sensible, industrious, and conservative people, and if they can only keep the beggar prince out of the saddle, they won't be ridden to the devil so easily in future.

We shall leave Paris to-morrow or next day, stopping in Rheims to see the churches, at Louvain for the Town House, and so on to Antwerp, Ghent, and Bruges. If you write, address me "poste restante" at the last named.

I promised your little girl, when I was in London, to send her an autograph from Paris, so I have scribbled her a few nonsense-verses which I hope will serve her turn. If I don't see you in Oxford, I shall stop long enough in London to get a glimpse of you. Our plan is to go to Switzerland and Germany, and so down to Italy for the winter. Then back to Paris, and so over to England on our way home next year. I hate travelling with my whole soul, though I like well enough to "be" in places.

With kindest regards to Mrs. Hughes, I  
remain always

Affectionately yours,  
J. R. L.

*To Mrs. Lewis A. Stimson*

BRUGES, June 25, 1873.

My dear Mrs. Stimson, — Here are the poor little verses I wrote the night before we left Paris and promised to send you. They have been rattling about in Mrs. Lowell's portfolio ever since, but I cannot see that they are at all the wiser for their travels. This is the first chance I have had to copy them out for you.

*"You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,  
The scent of the roses will hang round it still."*

---

Lucretius first, as I suppose,  
Ventured to fasten on the nose  
A simile both rich and rare,  
As savages hang jewels there;  
Perhaps *he* stole it from some Greek  
Whose poem lost 't were vain to seek;  
Perhaps he found it (if it ~~were~~ *was* his)  
By simply following his proboscis;  
At any rate 't is no wise dim  
That Tom Moore borrowed it of him,  
And thinned it to the filagree  
Which at my verses' top you see.

Some other poet 't was, no doubt,  
Who found a further secret out —

I mean, those intimate relations  
 'Twixt perfumes and associations;  
 Nay, 'twixt a smell of any kind  
 And the recesses of the mind,  
 Since Memory is reached by *no* door  
 So quickly as by that of odor.  
 Now, what do all these steps lead up to?  
 Why not speak frankly *ex abrupto*?  
 They lead to this — that when I'm gone,  
 And you sit trying fancies on,  
 Puzzling your brain with buts and maybes  
 About the future of your babies,  
 Planning some bow (Oh, sure, no harm)  
 To give your looks a heightened charm —  
 Sudden you'll give a little sniff  
 And say: "It surely seems as if  
 There was an odor in the room  
 Not just like mignonette in bloom,  
 Nor like the breeze that brings away  
 Sweet messages of new-mown hay: —  
 What? No! Why, yes, it is indeed  
 Stale traces of that hateful weed  
 The red man to his spoilers left,  
 Fatal as Nessus' burning weft."  
 And then with eyes still fixed in vision,  
 Unconscious of the least transition,  
 "I wonder what the ~~Lowells~~ Lowles are doing,  
 What bit of scenery pursuing.  
 Do they in Switzerland repent?  
 Or, o'er their guardian Murrays bent,  
 Do they endeavor to divine  
 Why they must needs enjoy the Rhine?  
 Count they the shocks the German kitchen  
 Is so incomparably rich in?  
 Do they across Lugano steer  
 In whose ethereal silence clear

It seems that one might hear a fin stir ?  
Or, in some grim and chilly minster,  
Are they condemned to dog the Suisse  
Through nasal rounds of that and this,  
Till, to the very marrow chilled,  
They wish men had not learned to build ?  
Or, bored with Tintorets and Titians  
And saints in all the queer positions  
They can be twisted to with paints,  
Do they wish wicked things of saints ?  
Well, *she* was pleasant as could be,  
So sweet and cheerful too — but *he* !  
He left behind at every visit  
Tobacco perfumes so explicit,  
That in the night I often woke  
Thinking myself about to choke.  
I wish I had his pipe to throw it  
Into the fire — a pretty poet !  
Whene'er he 's buried, those that love him,  
Instead of violets sweet above him,  
Should plant, to soothe his melancholy,  
The poisonous herb brought home by Raleigh !”

Now, when such vixenish thoughts assail you,  
And other lenitives all fail you,  
Do like the children, who are wiser  
And happier far than king or kaiser:  
*Play* that a thing is thus or so,  
And gradually you 'll find it grow  
The very truth (for bale or bliss)  
Of what you fancy that it is ;  
Just call the weed, to try the spell,  
Nepenthe, lotus, asphodel,  
And say my pipe was such as those  
The slim Arcadian shepherd blows  
On old sarcophagi to lull



An ear these twenty centuries dull —  
 Pipe of such sweet and potent tone  
 It charmed to shapes of deathless stone  
 The piper and the dancers too,  
 (As may mine never do for you,  
 But keep you, rather, fresh and fair  
 To breathe the sweetest mortal air).  
 Then, when your thought has worked its will,  
 And turned to sweetness things of ill,  
 Muse o'er your girlish smile and say,  
 "Well, now he's fairly gone away,  
 If on his faults one does not dwell,  
 There are worse bores than J. R. L."

*There's* an autograph for you! As long as one of Bach's fugues. Remember us to M. Garrier and Madame and Clarisse. Tell Baptiste (if he has not already boned it) that an old coat I left on a chair in my bedroom was meant for him. I have been over to Oxford to be doctored, and had a very pleasant time of it. You would respect me if you could have seen me in my scarlet gown. Kindest regards from both of us to both of you. We go from here in a day or two to Holland, then up the Rhine to Switzerland, where we join the Stephens and Miss Thackeray.

You must pardon the verses — my hand is out. The writing looks *something* like mine — not much.

Good-by; give an orange to each of the children for me, and believe me yours affectionately always,  
 J. R. L.

*To C. E. Norton*

VENICE, October 30, 1873.

. . . We made a pretty good *giro* in the Low Countries, going wherever there was a good Cathedral or Town Hall. Ypres charmed us especially, even after Bruges, which is always a Capua for me. The little town is so quiet and sleepy—no, not sleepy, but drowsy and dreamy, and the walk round the ramparts looking out over endless green and down upon the tranquil moat, with its swans as still as the water-lilies whose whiteness they tarnished, that I felt sure I was an enchanted prince till I paid my bill at the inn. But for that I should assuredly have stumbled upon the Sleeping Beauty before long. But, alas and alas, the only kiss that awakens towns that have dropt asleep nowadays is that of Dame Trade, who makes bond-slaves of all she brings back to life. We passed by where Charlemagne (with Mr. Freeman's pardon) is said to have been born, and by a little town that gave me a pleasanter thrill—the birthplace of Dan Froissart. It lay about half a mile away, cuddled among trees, with its great hulk of a church looming up above the houses like a hen among her brood. I did not choose to see it nearer—it would have betrayed itself. As it was, I must have seen it very much as it looked to the dear old canon himself, when he used

to play at all those incomprehensible games of which he gives us an inventory in his verses. . . .

I am more impressed by Tintoretto than ever before — his force, his freedom, and his originality. I never fairly *saw* the San Rocco pictures before — for one must choose the brightest days for them. The “Annunciation” especially has taken me by assault. That flight of baby angels caught up and whirled along in the wake of Gabriel like a skurry of autumn birds is to me something incomparable. And then the Cimas and the Bellinis and the Carpaccios! I think I am really happy here for the first time since I came abroad. . . .

I am looking forward now with compressed eagerness to our coming home. I shall not overstay my two years by a single day if I can help it. . . . For myself I see no result as yet but rest — which, to be sure, is a good thing — but I suppose when I get back I shall find I have learned something. But habit is so strong in me that I cannot work outside the reach of my wonted surroundings. . . .

*To Thomas Hughes*

VENICE, *Thanksgiving Day*, 1873.

My dear Friend, — As you are one of the good things I have to be thankful for in this life, I naturally think of you to-day, when I am far from the roast turkeys and plum-puddings

of Elmwood. It makes me a little sad to think that, if I were at home, this would have been the first of these festivals that I should have celebrated in the true patriarchal way with a grandson at my board. It is a queer sensation when one begins to put out these feelers towards the future that are to keep us alive in a 'certain sense (perhaps to repeat us) after we are gone. It is a melancholy kind of meditation this, but travelling is melancholy — a constant succession of partings like life. To-day some very agreeable Portuguese leave us whose acquaintance we made here, the Viscount de Soveral, his wife, and daughter. They have lived much in England, and he, I suspect, must have been either ambassador or attached to the Portuguese embassy there. To-morrow two English ladies, whom I had just learned to like very much, go off to Cairo. It is just like a constant succession of funerals — only people are buried in distance instead of in earth. Nay, since the earth is round, they will be covered from us by that also as in the grave.

The truth is, my dear friend, I have just been trying to make up my accounts, and as I don't very well know how, I have got dumpy before them — for the mysterious is always rather a damper for the spirits. Moreover, I am bored. I can't "do" anything over here except study a little now and then, and I long to get back to

my reeky old den at Elmwood. Then I hope to find I have learned something in my two years abroad. . . .

We have been through Switzerland, where I climbed some of the highest peaks with a spy-glass — a method I find very agreeable, and which spares honest sole-leathers. I am thinking of getting up an achromatic-telescope Alpine Club, to which none will be admitted till they have had two fits of gout, authenticated by a doctor's bill.

So far I wrote yesterday. To-day the weather is triumphant, and my views of life consequently more cheerful. It is so warm that we are going out presently in the gondola, to take up a few dropped stitches. Venice, after all, is incomparable, and during this visit I have penetrated its little slits of streets in every direction on foot. The canals only give one a visiting acquaintance. The *calli* make you an intimate of the household. I have found no books except two or three in the Venetian dialect. I am looking forward to home now, and should n't wonder if I took up my work at Harvard again, as they wish me to do.

We leave Venice probably to-morrow for Verona. Thence to Florence, Rome, and Naples. . . .

*To Miss Norton*FLORENCE, *January 7, 1874.*

. . . You find our beloved country dull, it seems. With a library like that at Shady Hill all lands are next door and all nations within visiting distance — better still, all ages are contemporary with us. But I understand your feeling, I think. Women need social stimulus more than we. They contribute to it more, and their magnetism, unless drawn off by the natural conductors, turns inward and irritates. Well, when I come back I shall be a good knob on which to vent some of your superfluous electricity; though on second thoughts I am not so sure of that, for the Leyden jar after a while becomes clever enough to give off sparks in return. But, dear Jane, the world in general is loutish and dull. I am more and more struck with it, and a certain sprightliness of brain, with which I came into life, is driven in on myself by continual rebuffs of misapprehension. I have grown wary and don't dare to let myself go, and what are we good for if our natural temperament does n't now and then take the bit between its teeth and scamper till our hair whistles in the wind? But indeed America is too busy, too troubled about many things, and Martha is only good to make puddings. There is no *leisure*, and that is the only climate in which society is

indigenous, the only one in which good-humor and wit and all the growths of art are more than half-hardy exotics. It is not that one needs to be idle, but only to have this southern atmosphere about him. Democracies lie, perhaps, too far north. You were made — with your breadth of sympathy, the contagion of your temperament, and the social *go* of your mind — to drive the four-in-hand of a *salon*, and American life boxes us all up in a one-horse *sulky* of absorbing occupation. We are isolated in our own despite, the people who have a common ground of sympathy in pursuits (or the want of them) are rare, and without partnership the highest forms of culture are impossible. . . .

*To Miss Grace Norton*

FLORENCE, *January 27, 1874.*

. . . We have been living very quietly here in Florence, which I find very beautiful in spite of the threnody Charles once wrote me about the loss of the walls. I hate changes in my familiar earth — they give me a feeling as if I myself had been transplanted and my roots unpleasantly disturbed; but I was not intimate enough with Florence to be discomforted, and the older parts of the town, which I chiefly haunt, have a noble mediæval distance and reserve for me — a frown I was going to call it, not of hostility, but of haughty doubt. These grim

palace fronts meet you with an aristocratic stare that puts you to the proof of your credentials. There is to me something wholesome in it that makes you feel your place. As for pictures, I am tired to death of 'em, and never could enjoy them much when I had to run them down. And then most of them are so bad. I like best the earlier ones, that say so much in their half-unconscious prattle, and talk nature to me instead of high art — spell the last two words with capitals, if you please. You see that they honestly mean to say something outside of themselves, and not to make you think about themselves. Children talk so, whose want of language often gives a pungency to their speech which the dictionary cannot give, but, alas, can take away. There is an instructive difference between the simple honesty of the earlier painters' portraits of themselves and the conscious attitudinizing of the later ones, which expresses what I mean. But the truth is, as Northcote says the choristers used to sing at St. Paul's, "I'm tired and want to go home"! . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

Albergo del Norte, FIRENZE,

*February 2, 1874.*

My dear Boy, — . . . I don't feel like going on with a poem I am writing about Agassiz, whom I understood and liked better as I grew



older (perhaps less provincial), and whom I shall miss as if some familiar hill should be gone out of my horizon when I come home and walk down the river-side to the village, as we used to call it; so I am going to answer your letter, which came yesterday. . . . I never was good for much as a professor — once a week, perhaps, at the best, when I could manage to get into some conceit of myself, and so could put a little of my *go* into the boys. The rest of the time my desk was as good as I. And then, on the other hand, my being a professor was n't good for me — it damped my gunpowder, as it were, and my mind, when it took fire at all (which was n't often), drawled off in an unwilling fuse instead of leaping to meet the first spark. Since I have discharged my soul of it and see the callus on my ankle, where the ball and chain used to be, subsiding gradually to smooth and natural skin, I feel like dancing round the table as I used when I was twenty, to let off the animal spirits. If I were a profane man, I should say, "Darn the College!" .

*To the Same*

Palazzo Barberini, ROME,

February 26, 1874.

. . . I sent you the other day from Florence a long poem (*too* long, I fear), in the nature of an elegy on Agassiz. His death came home to

me in a singular way, growing into my consciousness from day to day as if it were a graft new-set, that by degrees became part of my own wood and drew a greater share of my sap than belonged to it, as grafts sometimes will. I suppose that, unconsciously to myself, a great part of the ferment it produced in me was owing to the deaths of my sister Anna,<sup>1</sup> of Mrs. —, whom I knew as a child in my early manhood, and of my cousin Amory, who was inextricably bound up with the primal associations of my life, associations which always have a singular sweetness for me. A very deep chord had been touched also at Florence by the sight of our old lodgings in the Casa Guidi, of the balcony Mabel used to run on, and the windows we used to look out at so long ago. I got sometimes into the mood I used to be in when I was always repeating to myself,

“ King Pandion he is dead;  
All *thy* friends are lapt in lead ” —

verses which seem to me desolately pathetic. At last I began to hum over bits of my poem in my head till it took complete possession of me and worked me up to a delicious state of excitement, all the more delicious as my brain (or at any rate the musical part of it) had been lying dormant so long. I could n't sleep, and when I walked out I saw nothing outward. My old trick of

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Charles R. Lowell.

seeing things with my eyes shut after I had gone to bed (I mean whimsical things utterly alien to the train of my thoughts — for example, a hospital ward with a long row of white, untenanted beds, and on the farthest a pile of those little wooden dolls with red-painted slippers) revived in full force. Nervous, horribly nervous, but happy for the first time (I mean consciously happy) since I came over here. And so by degrees my poem worked itself out. The parts came to me as I came awake, and I wrote them down in the morning. I had all my bricks — but the mortar would n't *set*, as the masons say. However, I got it into order at last. You will see there is a logical sequence if you look sharp. It was curious to me after it was done to see how fleshly it was. This impression of Agassiz had wormed itself into my consciousness, and without my knowing it had colored my whole poem. I could not help feeling how, if I had been writing of Emerson, for example, I should have been quite otherwise ideal. But there it is, and you can judge for yourself. I think there is some go in it somehow, but it is too near me yet to be judged fairly by me. It is old-fashioned, you see, but none the worse for that. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

Albergo Crocolle, NAPOLI

Marzo 12, 1874.

My dear Jane,— If I should offer to explain any eccentricities of chirography by telling you my fingers were numb, you would think me joking, and be much rather inclined to account for it by the intoxication of this heavenliest of climates as you remember it. But I speak forth the words of truth and soberness when I assure you that Vesuvius is hoary with snow to his very roots, that Sorrento has just been hidden by a cloud which I doubt not is bursting in hail, for we were greeted on our arrival last night by a hailstone chorus of the most emphatic kind, so that the streets were white with it as we drove shivering along, and the top of the 'bus rattled to the old tune of "Pease on a Trencher." All the way from Rome I saw Virgil's too fortunate husbandmen (he was right in his parenthetic *sua si bona norint*) working with their great blue cloaks on, or crouching under hedges from the wire-edged wind. The very teeth in their harrows must have been chattering for cold. And this is the climate you so rapturously wish us joy of! *Vedi Napoli, e poi mori* of a catarrh. I envy you with your foot of honest snow on the ground where it ought to be, and not indigested in the atmosphere,

giving it a chill beyond that of condensed Unitarianism.

We left Rome after a fortnight's visit to the Storys, which was very pleasant *quoad* the old friends, but rather wild and whirling *quoad* the new. Two receptions a week, one in the afternoon and one in the evening, were rather confusing for wits so eremitical as mine. I am not equal to the *grand monde*. 'T is very well of its kind, I dare say, but it is not *my* kind, and I still think the company I kept at home better than any I have seen — especially better in its simplicity. The Old World carries too much top-hammer for an old salt like me to be easy in his hammock. There are good things west of the ocean in spite of ——'s pessimism, and better things to come, let us hope. . . .

I had a great pleasure at Rome in seeing William's<sup>1</sup> new statue of Alcestis, which I think is *di gran lunga* ahead of anything he has done. It is very simple and noble. She is walking as if in a dream. The right hand gathers the mantle about her head. The left hangs loosely at her side. The face has a lovely expression of awakening and half-bewildered expectation. The drapery is admirably graceful, and the gliding motion of the figure (seen from whichever point of view) gives a unity of intention and feeling to the whole figure which I call masterly.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. William W. Story.

I know no satisfaction more profound than that we feel in the success of an old friend, in the real success of anybody, for the matter of that. It was so pleasant to be able to say frankly, "You have done something really fine, and which everybody will like." I wonder whether I shall ever give that pleasure to anybody. Never mind, it is next best to feel it about the work of another, and I never do care very long for anything I have done myself. But, as one gets older, one can't help feeling sad sometimes to think how little one has achieved.

It is now (as regards my date) to-morrow the 13th. We have been twice to the incomparable Museum, which to me is the most interesting in the world. There is the keyhole through which we barbarians can peep into a Greek interior — provincial Greek, Roman Greek, if you will, but still Greek. Vesuvius should be sainted for this miracle of his, hiding Pompeii and Herculaneum under his gray mantle so long, and saving them from those dreadful melters and smashers, the Dark Ages. Now we come in on them with the smell of wine still in their cups — we catch them boiling their eggs, selling their figs, and scribbling naughty things on the walls. I do not find that they were much our betters in parietal wit, but in sense of form how they dwarf us! They contrived to make commonplace graceful — or rather they

could not help it. Well, we are alive (after a fashion) and they dead. That is one advantage we have over 'em. And they could not look forward to going home to Cambridge and to pleasant visits at Shady Hill. On the whole, I pity 'em. They are welcome to their poor little bronzes and things. Haven't we our newspapers, marry come up! What did they know about the Duke of Edinburgh's wedding and all the other edifying things that make us wise and great, I should like to know? They were poor devils, after all, and I trample on 'em and snub 'em to my heart's content. Where were their Common Schools? They are dumb and cast down their eyes, every mother's son of 'em. Not a school-desk among all their relics! No wonder they came to grief.

It is now after dinner. I write this by instalments, as the amiable bandits of this neighborhood send a man they have caught home to his friends till they pay a ransom — first one ear, then the other, and so on. I am a little cross with the table-d'hôte, because I always know so well what is coming — it is like the signs of the zodiac. I think we should be bored to death with the regular courses of the seasons were it not for the whimsicality of the weather. That saves us from suicide. On the other hand, though depressed by the inevitable *rosbif* and *pollo arrostito*, I am enlivened by a fiddle

and guitar, and a voice singing the Naples of twenty years ago under my window. For Naples has changed for the worse (shade of Stuart Mill! I mean for the better) more than any other Italian city. Fancy, there are no more lazzaroni, there is no more *corricolo*. The mountains are here, and Capri, but where is Naples? *Italia unita* will be all very well one of these days, I doubt not. At present it is paper money, and the practical instead of the picturesque. Is the day of railways worse than that of Judgment? Why could not one country be taken and the other left? Let them try all their new acids of universal suffrage and what not on the tough body of the New World. The skin will heal again. But this lovely, disburied figure of Ausonia—they corrode her marble surface beyond all cure. *Panem et circenses* was n't so bad after all. A bellyful and amusement—is n't that more than the average mortal is apt to get? more than perhaps he is capable of getting? America gives the *panem*, but do you find it particularly amusing just now? My dear Jane, you see I have had a birthday since I wrote last, and these are the sentiments of a gentleman of fifty-five—and after dinner. Change in itself becomes hateful to us as we grow older, and naturally enough, because every change in ourselves is for the worse. I am writing to you, for ex-



ample, by lamp-light, and I feel what used to be a pleasure almost a sin. To-morrow morning I shall see that the crows have been drinking at my eyes. Fanny is wiser (as women always are), and is sound asleep in her arm-chair on the other side of the fire. The wood here, by the way, is poplar—good for the inn-keeper, but only cheering for the guest, as it reminds him of the Horatian *large super foco ligna reponens*, and the old fellow in Smollett, whom you never read. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

Hôtel de Lorraine, 7 Rue de Beaune,  
PARIS, May 11, 1874.

. . . Hearty thanks for all the trouble you have taken about my poor old poem. I had quite got over the first flush by the time I saw it in print, and now it seems weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable enough, God knows! Well, I confess I thought it better till I saw it. . . .

*To W. D. Howells*

PARIS, May 13, 1874.

My dear Howells,—I was very glad to get a line from you. I should have sent my poem directly to you (for it tickled me that our positions should be reversed, and that you should be sitting in the seat of the scorner where I used to sit); but I happened to see a number

of the "Atlantic" in Florence, and in the list of contributors my name was left out. As the magazine had just changed hands I did not know but it had changed minds as well, so I would not put you in a position where your friendship might come in conflict with some whimsey of your publishers. Thank you heartily for the pleasant things you say about the poem. I thought it very well just after parturition, and explained any motives of aversion I might feel by that uncomfortable redness which is common to newly born babes. But since I have it in print I have not been able to read it through — but only to dip in here and there on passages which C. E. N. had doubts about. What a witch is this Imagination, who sings as she weaves till we seem to *see* the music in the growing web, and when all is done that magic has vanished and the poor thing looks cheap as printed muslin! Well, I am pleased, all the same, with what you say, because, after all, you need n't have said it unless you liked.

Why, of course I went to see young Mead — am I not very fond of his sister and her husband? I should have gone again, but that poem got hold of me and squeezed all my life out for the time and a good bit after.

Now a word of business. I wrote C. E. N. day before yesterday, and of course forgot what I wished to say — or a part of it. If Osgood

still wishes to reprint the Agassiz, pray make these further corrections —

And scanned the festering *heap* we all despise.

I left out the word in copying. Instead of the “paler primrose of a second spring,” read “Like those pale blossoms,” etc., as I wrote at first. Why I changed it I can’t guess, for it makes an absurdity. I suppose I was misled by the alliteration. The verse is a better one as printed, but I could n’t have looked at the context. I mean those blossoms that come on fruit trees sometimes in September. I have seen them once or twice in my own garden.

We have taken our passage for the 24th June, and shall arrive, if all go well, in time for the “glorious Fourth.” I hope we shall find you in Cambridge. I long to get back, and yet am just beginning to get wonted (as they say of babies and new cows) over here. The delightful little inn where I am lodged is almost like home to me, and the people are as nice as can be.

Tell Mrs. Howells — with my kindest regards and Mrs. Lowell’s too — that we are just going out shopping. The weather is infamous. Love to Winny and Boy, alias Booah.

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

*To Thomas Hughes*

Hôtel de Lorraine, 7 Rue de Beaune,  
PARIS, May 16, 1874.

My dear Friend, — Here we are back again in our old quarters, though not so soon by several weeks as I expected. But how get away from Rome, even though it be changed much for the worse so far as its outside is concerned? It is a providential arrangement that after fifty one hates improvement; it is the drag that hinders things from going too fast. In this respect Paris is comforting, for I find the French exactly where I left 'em a year ago, only more so.

In your revolution I took a personal interest, as I need not tell you. I happened to be where I saw the English papers at the time, and though I was disgusted that you should not have been returned, I was entirely pleased with the way in which you lost your election. It was like you, for it was honorable and magnanimous, and therefore a higher kind of success than winning the seat would have been. But men like you are wanted in Parliament, and so I feel sure that I shall have to write M. P. after your name again before long. Last year you said something about running over to Paris for a week. It would be very jolly if you would come, now that you have no Parliamentary duties to detain you.

I can't tell you how glad I am to be on my way home. I hope after I get there I shall find I have got something by my travels better than a grayer beard and the torments of what the doctors call "suppressed gout." It is suppressed after the fashion of the Commune, which has jumped from the Parisian great toe into every nerve and muscle of the body. . . .

*To Leslie Stephen*

Hôtel de Lorraine, 7 Rue de Beaune,  
PARIS, May 16, 1874.

Dear Stephen, — We have got thus far on our way home, and hope to arrive in England about the first of next month. I was on the point of writing you again from Florence when I was suddenly snatched up by a poem which occupied me wholly for some time, and left me, like a bit of rock-weed at low water, dangling helpless and waiting for the next tide.

I read your book <sup>1</sup> with great interest and, in the main, with great satisfaction, and gave it to Harry James, who liked it altogether. My only objection to any part of your book is, that I think our beliefs more a matter of choice (natural selection, perhaps, but anyhow not logical) than you would admit, and that I find no fault with a judicious shutting of the eyes. You

<sup>1</sup> This book was *Essays on Free Thinking and Plain Speaking*.

would have shut yours tight before you finally let go at the end of your bad five minutes, and yet I fancy the descent would have been both interesting scientifically and morally picturesque. . . .

When I was with the Storys in Rome, I took down one day while waiting for my breakfast a volume of the "Living Age," made up of articles from the English journals. I hit upon one entitled "In a Library," and liked it so much that I carried it to my room and read all the rest of the series I could find with equal interest. There were some more than odd coincidences with my own experience. You can fancy how tickled I was when I found I had been reading you all the while. I actually damaged my eyes over them—reading on after candle-light and when I ought to have been abed. There, you see, is perfectly disinterested testimony. The pills had no label. I tried one and then swallowed the box because they did me good.

I half feel at home now that I am back again in my little inn, with its household as simple and honest as if it were in Arcadia. It amuses me (I know it ought to sadden me, but I can't help it) to find the French in the same *cul-de-sac* where I left them a year ago, and saying helplessly, *C'est une crise très sérieuse, mais que voulez-vous? Nous sommes Français—voilà tout!* And yet

the same Frenchmen have managed their finances in a way that ought to make *us* blush to the roots of our hair. . . .

*To George Putnam*

PARIS, May 19, 1874.

. . . I ought long ago to have answered your letter, received just before we left Florence. But somehow I could not. That long list of deaths, following so closely upon each other's heels, saddened me profoundly. I had a notion that as we grow older we get used to death, and in some sense it is true, but no habitude can make us less sensible to deaths which make us older and lonelier by widening the gap between our past and present selves. Our own lives seem to lose their continuity, and those who died long ago seem more wholly dead when some one who was associated with them and linked our memory more indissolubly with them goes out into the endless silence and separation. I was very much struck with this when I heard of the death of my cousin Amory Lowell. I had hardly seen her for many years, but she was closely intertwined with all the recollections of my early life. I can't tell how, but the thought of her kept Broomly Vale unchanged, and she brought my father and my uncle John before me as they were in those old days. A great part of my fairyland went to dust with her. . . .

For my own part, though I have had a great deal of home-sickness, I come back to Cambridge rather sadly. I have not been over-well of late. The doctor in Rome, however, gave my troubles a name—and that by robbing them of mystery has made them commonplace. He said it was *suppressed gout*. It has a fancy of gripping me in the stomach sometimes, holding on like a slow fire for seven hours at a time. It is wonderful how one gets used to things, however. But it seems to be growing lighter, and I hope to come home robust and red. . . .

*To Leslie Stephen*

PARIS, May 27, 1874.

My dear Stephen, — I can't say that the sight of your handwriting again was good for *sair een*, for the force of mine is so far abated that I had to take your letter to the window — but it was just as good as if it had been.

I had thought about the white-choker business and all that, and from your point of view I liked your book altogether. My objection was a purely personal one. I shut my eyes resolutely (I confess) when I turn them in certain directions, and trust my instincts or my longings or whatever you choose to call them. For myself I hate to see religion compounded with police as much as you do, but I confess that my intimacy with the French makes me doubt,



makes me ready to welcome almost anything that will save them from their logic and deliver them over, bound hand and foot, to anything that will give them a continuity that looks before and after with as great a respect for facts as for syllogisms. . . .

I hope whoever stole the "Atlantic" from you did it because of my poem. You shall have another copy one of these days, but so long as you like me, you are welcome to think what you must of what I write. Besides, this is an old story with me now. It should have some virtue in it, to judge by what it took out of me.

If we had only got here as soon as I expected I should have met you in Paris. I never saw my habit of taking root in so ill a light before. It would have been so jolly, for I know all the old nooks and corners so well now that I should have been an admirable guide, and these levels suit my elderly feet. It is too bad, but our weaknesses always come home to roost at last. . . .

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

*To Thomas Hughes*

ELMWOOD, July 11, 1874.

Dear Friend,— . . . We had a foggy and rainy passage, but the northwesterly and south-

easterly winds that made it disagreeable made it also short. . . . At about 7 A. M. of the 4th we landed, and by half past nine I was at home again. . . .

This has been a rainy summer, so I found everything as green as in the noble old island I had just left. The birds have pretty much given over singing, but my immemorial cat-bird made music all dinner-time day before yesterday, and next morning in the early dawn the Phœbe was calling her own name sadly, like one of Ovid's metamorphosed ladies. . . .

*To Miss Grace Norton*

ELMWOOD, July 21, 1874.

. . . It is so long since I have been able to send news from Cambridge that I find a certain relish in it, and begin again to think that it is as important as most other domains of history. Was I not told yesterday by Mrs. Mary Mullins that "Cambridge had seemed kind o' lonesome without me"? and shall I not strive to atone to her (Cambridge to wit) for this two years' widowhood? I do not think, however, that the dear soul missed me very much, nor that "every jow" the bell of the First Parish gave sounded in her ear "Come back, Russell Lowell!" These returns from the under-world would be good medicine for one inclined to

value himself over-duly. Things seem to have got on very well during our absence, and it is odds if nine tenths of our fellow-citizens missed us from the customary hill any more than they would if we had authentically suffered obituary. I have sometimes had traitorous surmises about Alcestis, as if she might have surprised Admetus seated before a smoking joint of one of those sheep Apollo once tended for him, and inarticulate for more material reasons than joy. Our returns, whether quick or slow, prove to us that we are small prophets in our own country. I except All-of-you, who welcomed me better than I deserved.

I do not find so many changes as I expected. . . .

To — —

ELMWOOD, August 21, 1874.

Dear —, — I do not well enough remember the poem you ask about to give any intelligent opinion about it. If I recollect, it is one of those monologues of self-analysis that Browning brought into fashion and which must depend for their interest on poignancy of phrase and ingenuity of treatment rather than on any value they may possess, whether metaphysical or (in the highest sense) poetical. Generally, I mean, for I think Browning's Caliban a very wonderful psychological study. But the *form* is

always a bother to me. People don't cross-examine their motives and dissect the nerves of their character in this fashion. If they did, to know one's self would not be the tough job it generally turns out to be. A man's ignorance in this useful department of learning holds out wonderfully against the schooling of experience, the good offices of friends and enemies, nay, even against the sharper lesson of the suffering which sooner or later is sure to be its own result. If it didn't, suicide would be much more common than it is. The ingenuity of self-love thrusts numberless buffers between the conceit of ourselves and the thrusts of conscience.

As for the aphrodisiac or cantharides style of verses, I do not believe that the sexual impulses need any spurring, nor, if they did, that the rowel would be forged of that most precious metal of poesy whereof the Shield of Achilles or the Grecian Urn could be hammered. The line between the sensuous and the sensual is that between sentiment and sentimentalism, between passion and brutish impulse, between love and appetite, between Vittoria Colonna and Madame Bovary. Cleopatra, one may suspect, was much rather a harlot of the brain (that is, from political motives) than of the senses, though Shakespeare, and even Dryden, have idealized her in the only possible way by throw-

ing around her the lurid light of a sublime passion, and even then there is the inevitable aspic at the end of the rose-strewn path of dalliance. To show her disidealized into a mere lustful animal, is to degrade her to a Catherine II., and thrust her beyond the pale of poesy. Shelley almost alone (take his "Stanzas to an Indian Air," for example) has trodden with an unfaltering foot the scimitar-edged bridge which leads from physical sensation to the heaven of song. No, I certainly do *not* believe in the value of any literature that renders the relation between the sexes more ticklish than nature has already made it, or which paints self-indulgence as nobler than self-restraint. That is to unsettle the only moral centre of gravity we have. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, September 19, 1874.

. . . I have been at work, and really hard at work, in making books that I had read and marked really useful by indexes of all peculiar words and locutions. I have finished in this way, since I came home, Golding's "Ovid," Warner's "Albion's England," Laing's and the Thornton "Metrical Romances," the *Chevalier au lion*; and yesterday, in eight unbroken hours, I did Barbour's "Brus." Then I have been reading many volumes of the Early Eng-

lish Text Society's series in the same thorough way. A professor, you know, must be learned, if he can't be anything else, and I have now reached the point where I feel sure enough of myself in Old French and Old English to make my corrections with a pen instead of a pencil as I go along. Ten hours a day, on an average, I have been at it for the last two months, and get so absorbed that I turn grudgingly to anything else. My only other reading has been Mr. Sibley's book of "Harvard Graduates," which is as unilluminated, dry, and simple as the fourteenth-century prose of the Early English Texts. But it interests me and makes me laugh. It is the prettiest rescue of prey from Oblivion I ever saw. The gallant librarian, like a knight-errant, slays this giant, who carries us all captive sooner or later, and then delivers his prisoners. There are ninety-seven of them by tale, and as he fishes them out of those dismal *oubliettes* they come up dripping with the ooze of Lethe, like Curll from his dive in the Thames, like him also gallant competitors for the crown of Dulness. It is the very balm of authorship. No matter how far you may be gone under, if you are a graduate of Harvard College you are sure of being dredged up again and handsomely buried, with a catalogue of your works to keep you down. I do not know when the provincialism of New England has been thrust upon

me with so ineradicable a barb. Not one of their works which stands in any appreciable relation with the controlling currents of human thought or history, not one of them that has now the smallest interest for any living soul ! And yet somehow I make myself a picture of the past out of this arid waste, just as the mirage rises out of the dry desert. Dear old Sibley ! I would read even a sermon of his writing, so really noble and beautiful is the soul under that commonplace hull !

Since I wrote you I have finished an autobiography. Do not be frightened, dear Jane ; it is only ten lines long, and I plagiarized every word of it from Drake's "American Biography," which was far better informed than I found myself to be. Last night was our first Whist Club since my return. I looked in the record, found it was John's deal, and we began as if there had been no gap. The club is now in its thirtieth year, and I was saying last night that it was, I thought, both a creditable and American fact that I had never heard a dispute or even a difference at the table in all those years. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, October 7, 1874.

My dear Charles, — The nameless author of that delightful poem, "The Squyr of Lowe

Degree "(may God him save and see!) gives a list of every bird he can think of that sang to comfort his hero. Here they are: —

1. Lavrock,
2. Nightingale,
3. Pie,
4. Popinjay,
5. Throstil,
6. Marlyn,
7. Wren,
8. Jay,
9. Sparrow,
10. Nuthatch,
- \* 11. Starling,
12. Goldfinch,
13. Ousel.

On Monday the 5th I walked up to the Oaks with Stillman, and in a quarter of an hour had noted on a paper the following birds (most of which counted by dozens): —

1. Robin,
2. Wilson's thrush (singing),
3. Chewink,
4. Bluebird (warbling as in spring),
5. Phœbe (doing his best),
6. Ground sparrow (singing),
7. Tree " ( " ),
8. Nuthatch,



9. Flicker (laughing and crying like Andromache),
10. Chickadee (doing all he could),
11. Goldfinch,
12. Linnet,
13. Jay,
14. Crow (to balance his popinjay),
15. Catbird.

Thus I take down the gauntlet which you left hanging for all comers in your English hedge. I don't believe that hedge birds are a whit more respectable than hedge priests or hedge schoolmasters. All the while we were there the air was tinkling with one or other of them. Remember — this was in October. Three cheers for the rivers of Damascus!

Affectionately always,

HOSEA BIGLOW.

*Et ego in Arcadia*, says Mr. Wilbur.

*To E. L. Godkin*

ELMWOOD, October 10, 1874.

Dear Godkin, — . . . I see they are driven at Washington to a reform of the office-holders at the South. It has always been my belief that if tenure of office had been permanent, secession would have been (if not impossible) vastly more difficult, and reconstruction more easy and simple. As it was, a large body of the most

influential men in the discontented States knew that the election of Lincoln would be fatal to their bread and butter—and, after all, it is to this that the mass of men are loyal. It is well that they should be so, for habitual comfort is the main fortress of conservatism and respectability, two old-fashioned qualities for which all the finest sentiments in the world are but a windy substitute. . . .

By the way, I found a curious misprint in the new edition of Chapman (vol. ii. p. 159), which I thought might make a paragraph for the “Nation.”

“*Caucusses*

That cut their too large murderous thieveries  
To their den’s length still.”

He means *Cacus*, of course, though the editor did n’t see it, for the word does n’t occur in his index of proper names. It is a curious *sors castigatrix preli*, at any rate, and hits true, for the Caucus always cuts down its candidates to the measure of its robber’s cave. It shows, too, that old Chapman pronounced *a au*.

And by this graceful transition I come to the reason why I write you to-day instead of in some indefinite future. In a sonnet printed in last week’s “Nation” there is a misprint which it were well to correct. For “Nothing to *court*” *lege* “Nothing to *count*.” I tried to think it made some better meaning than mine, but

could n't make it out. Thank the Power who presides over the "Nation" (who, I am given to understand, is the D—l) that I am of calmer temper than those are whom a misprint drives clean daft — I mean one in their own contribution to the general *tedium vitae*. . . . Good-by, with gratitude always for the admirable work you are doing.

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

*To Thomas Hughes*

ELMWOOD, February 16, 1875.

My dear Friend, — . . . I [have been reading] Grote's "Greece," which I had never read before, and its prosy good sense was medicinal to me. His honest incapacity of imagination is singularly soothing. The curious political (not æsthetic) analogies struck me more forcibly than ever. I have long thought, and Grote's book confirmed me in it, that this history will first be adequately written by a Yankee. Grote's Dutch blood helped him a little, but the moment that panhellenism (the need of which he could see plainly enough two thousand odd years ago) showed itself in a million armed men over here under his very nose, he fancied them sprung from unblessed dragon's teeth,

"And back recoiled, he knew not why,  
E'en at the sound himself had made."

The sentimentalist stood revealed under the imposing outside of the banker. It is humorously sad to me.

As with you in the early part of the winter, our talk now is wholly of the weather. So long as it was cold with you (a fact I have observed before) it was exceptionally mild here. We had a true Indian summer, and I heard birds singing by Beaver Brook in November. Being much of an hypæthral, I augured ill from it, and was sure that Winter was waiting only to get a better purchase on us. About Christmas he had got everything ready in his laboratory and shut upon us with the snap of a steel trap. Since then our thermometers have skulked in the neighborhood of zero (Fahr.). So continuous a cold has brought down the oldest inhabitant to the wretched level of us juniors. Out of doors, however, it has been noble weather, the most piquant sauce for my walks to and from College — where, by the way, I am installed again with a class in Old French and another in Dante. In my study sometimes of an evening, when the northwest took a vigorous turn at the bellows, and the thermometer in the back parts could not be coaxed above 42°, it has been more than invigorating. But I have not given in, nor once admitted the furnace, unknown to my youth and my progenitors. I always was a natural tory, and in Eng-

land (barring Dizzy) should be a stanch one. I would not give up a thing that had roots to it, though it might suck up its food from graveyards. Good-by. God bless you! . . .

*To T. S. Perry*

ELMWOOD, March 2, 1875.

My dear Perry, — I don't believe I ever wrote a line for the "Harvardiana" of 1836-37. I certainly did not write the poem you mention, and doubt if I ever saw it, for I was not a subscriber. For 1837-38 I was one of the editors, and scribbled some wretched stuff, which I hope you will be too charitable to exhume. I was in my nineteenth year, but younger and greener than most boys are at that age. In short, I was as great an ass as ever brayed and thought it singing.

I believe our volume was the worst of the lot, for nobody took much interest in it, and the editing was from hand to mouth. N. Hale, Jr., did the cleverest things in it, as indeed he was perhaps the cleverest man in the class.

I hope to see you before long, but have promised some copy for the "North American Review" for Wednesday and shall have to keep abreast of the press. Authorship is a wretched business, after all. . . .

*To W. D. Howells*

ELMWOOD, *March 21, 1875.*

Dear Howells,—There was one verse in the “Border” sonnet which, when I came to copy it, worried me with its lack of just what I wanted. Only *one*? you will say. Yes, all; but never mind — this one *most*. Instead of “Where the shy ballad could its leaves unfold,” read “dared its blooms.” I had liefer “cup” — but cup is already metaphoric when applied to flowers, and Bottom the Weaver would be sure to ask in one of the many journals he edits — “How unfold a cup? Does he mean one of those pocket drinking-cups — leathern inconveniencies that always *stick* when you try to unfold ’em?” Damn Bottom! We ought not to think of him, but then the Public is made up of him, and I wish him to know that I was thinking of a flower. Besides, the sonnet is, more than any other kind of verse, a deliberate composition, and “susceptible of a high polish,” as the dendrologists say of the woods of certain trees. Or shall we say “grew in secret bold”? I write both on the opposite leaf, that you may choose one to paste over and not get the credit of tinkering my rhymes.

Yours always, J. R. L.

dared its blooms  
grew in secret bold.

Perhaps, after all, it is the buzzing of that *b* in blooms and bold, answering his brother *b* in ballads, that b-witched me, and merely changing "could" to "dared" is all that is wanted.

The sentiment of this sonnet pleases me.

*To Mrs. S. B. Herrick*

ELMWOOD, June 3, 1875.

. . . An author who was not pleased with the friendly warmth of a letter like yours must be more superhuman than I can pretend to be. I *am* pleased, and I thank you very cordially for this proof that I have been of some use in the world.

Your list is nearly complete, and I can make it so as to the *names*, though I cannot furnish you with the books. My first publication was a small volume of poems ("A Year's Life"), printed in my twenty-first year and long out of print. In 1844 I printed a prose volume of "Conversations on Some of Our Old Poets." They were mainly written three years before, and are now also these many years out of print. I have lately been urged to reprint them and possibly may, though they are naturally somewhat immature. There is a second series of "Biglow Papers" (and in my opinion the best), prefaced by an essay which, I think, might interest you. In the "North American Review" (some time in 1872, I believe) I printed

an essay on Dante which contained the results, at least, of assiduous study. In the April number of this year is an article on Spenser. These would be in the library of the Peabody Institute probably. In the "Diamond" edition of my poems there are a few verses added to "The Cathedral" — perhaps some others, though I am not sure. I think your list is otherwise complete. If not, I shall be obliged to you if you will allow me to send you any that may be lacking. In the "Atlantic Monthly" for May, 1874, is an "Elegy on Agassiz" which, I suspect, is among my best verse. In the "Atlantic" for August, 1870, is an introduction by me to some "Extracts from the Journal of a Virginian travelling in New England." Towards the end of it is a passage the sentiment of which will perhaps please you. At any rate, it has always been my own way of thinking on that point. I was roundly abused in some of the newspapers at the time, but I am happy in believing that the whole North is now come round to where I then stood.

But pardon me, I am getting garrulous without the excuse of senility. One is liable to these pitfalls when rapt in the contemplation of that precious being, who, in proportion as he interests us, is apt to be a bore to the rest of mankind. Be so good as to let me know what volumes you want, and they shall be sent to your address. . . .



*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, June 15, 1875.

. . . I meant that so important a package as that which you acknowledged in such friendly terms should have been heralded by a letter in answer to yours. I meant to have torn out all the prints in the book (which are simply disgusting — especially that of *Zekle and Huldry*), but I forgot it. I divine in your note of this morning a certain sensitiveness about its unanswered forerunner (as if you had said too much) which quite justifies me in the pleasure I had when I read it. Mrs. Lowell liked it as much as I did. I am quite sure there can be no sweeter and kindlier feeling than having been something to somebody in this purely disembodied way. Only the Somebody must be of the right kind. You must pardon me the unseemly confidence, but I receive a great many letters from women (I suppose all poets do), and hardly ever one that I can answer. They are commonly like those of Mrs. Tilton, some of which I have seen in the newspapers, a kind of stuff that makes sensible women doubt the capacity of their sex for any political association with men. I need not say that yours was of quite another complexion, and such as an honest man could be heartily pleased with. So far from tickling my vanity, it added to my self-distrust, and made

me wonder how I had deserved so grateful a congratulation. It did me real good in quickening my feeling of responsibility to myself, while it encouraged me to think that I had sometimes cast my bread upon waters which did not steadily ebb towards oblivion.

I fear the volume I sent you will try your eyes sadly, but it is the most complete edition of what I have written in verse. I hope you will permit me to send you also my two volumes of prose, to which a third will be added next autumn. The article on Spenser has been wholly rewritten since you heard it, and contains only a passage or two here and there which were in the lecture.

I should have answered your letter at once, but I am really a very busy man, and (except in verse) a much slower writer than when I was younger. It is harder to weigh anchor than it used to be, and there is no Lapland witch to sell a fair wind to an old fellow of fifty-six. You shall let me count you for one, nevertheless, for I felt my sails strain at the yards in the friendly breath of your sympathy.

Expect another package from me ere long, but do not feel that I shall be forever bombarding you with my books. I doubt if I shall ever lecture in Baltimore (or anywhere else again) — for I like it not. I am sure I should have done it with more spirit before, had I known how sympathetic an auditor I had. . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, July 6, 1875.

. . . My having been very busy must plead my pardon (for I assume it in advance) for not answering your last letter sooner. We, too, here in my birthplace, having found out that something happened here a hundred years ago, must have our centennial, and, since my friend and townsman Dr. Holmes could n't be had, I felt bound to do the poetry for the day. We have still standing the elm under which Washington took command of the *American* (till then *provincial*) army, and under which also Whitefield had preached some thirty years before. I took advantage of the occasion to hold out a hand of kindly reconciliation to Virginia. I could do it with the profounder feeling, that no family lost more than mine by the civil war. Three nephews (the hope of our race) were killed in one or other of the Virginia battles, and three cousins on other of those bloody fields. The poem will be printed in the "Atlantic" for August, and will, I hope and believe, do good.

So you are in Alexandria, a town of which I have very pleasant memories, now fifty years old. I spent some days in the old Carroll house there with the Carrolls, who are connections of mine by marriage. They are all gone, but I hope the dear old house is still standing. Pray go and

see it and tell me if the river behind it be as pretty, and the English walnuts in front as fine as I remember. The house, I think, must be large, for (unless it loom through the haze of memory) it was larger than that in which I was born and still live, and that is not a small one.

I suppose it must have been the extreme solitude in which I grew up, and my consequent unconsciousness of any public, that made me so frankly communicative. Poets get their sorrows and passions out of themselves by carving the lava (grown cold) into pretty forms. I should not be so indiscreet now, I suppose, and yet a living verse can only be made of a living experience — and that our own. One of my most personal poems, “After the Burial,” has roused strange echoes in men who assured me they were generally insensible to poetry. After all, the only stuff a solitary man has to spin is himself.

I am sorry you should write in so desponding a tone of yourself. Surely at your age life (imposture as it often is) has many satisfactions left. Dame Life, to be sure, keeps a gambling-table; but even if we have played for a great stake and lost, we must recollect that she is always ready to lend us what we need for another chance. Literature and work are the exhaustless *solamina vitae*, and if you find so much pleasure in what I have done (who am but third-rate compared with the masters) you have yet a great deal to enjoy.

Do not let your friendly enthusiasm (a very great pleasure to me personally) lead you to exaggerate my merits, or overlook my defects. I think more might have been made of me if I could have given my whole life to poetry, for it is an art as well as a gift, but you must try to see me as I am.

I have ordered my two books to be sent to your Alexandria address, and enclose two slips of paper with my good wishes on them that you may paste them into the volumes to remind you whence they came. I should have sent them sooner, but besides my Centennial task, I had to preside over our Commencement dinner, a service that seems simple enough, but which worries a shy man like myself to a degree that would make you laugh. . . .

*To John W. Field*

ELMWOOD, July 14, 1875.

. . . I am sitting now (with Fanny sewing beside me) on our new veranda, which we built last fall on the north side of the house, and find inexpugnably delightful. We are having a *green* summer this year, and to-day is rather like June than July, with a sea-breeze (you call it east wind, I believe, in Europe) winnowing the heat away, and trees and clouds as they only are at home where they are old friends. The catalpa is just coming into blossom under my eyes, and

the chestnut hard by is hoary with blossoms, making it look all the younger, like powder on the head of a girl of eighteen. A quail is calling "Bob White" over in the field, butterflies are shimmering over Fanny's flowers, robins are singing with all their might, and there will come a humming-bird before long. I see the masts in the river and the spires in the town, and whatever noise of traffic comes to me now and then from the road but emphasizes the feeling of seclusion. What is your lake of Geneva to this? . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, *August 3, 1875.*

. . . It is now thirty-seven years since I first knew him [Emerson], and he showed me some of his walks in Concord, especially, I remember, "the Cliff." And Edmund Quincy is sixty-eight! How we move on, without show of motion, like shadows of trees in the sun! But one's horizon widens, thank God! I often wonder over this unconscious broadening of the mind. We absorb experience at all our pores till by and by our whole substance is changed and renewed. But in order to be wise we must be able to enter again into the consciousness of these modes of being we have sloughed off.

All that I was I am, and all the more

For being other than I was before;

And what I spent is still my best of store. . . .

*To Mrs. S. B. Herrick*

ELMWOOD, August 5, 1875.

. . . Your letter gave me a great deal of pleasure, for surely there can be no purer satisfaction than that of feeling that you are making another person happier; and, though I may think that you exaggerate my absolute merits, yet I can gratefully accept your statement of them so far as regards yourself without abatement. It is something to be that to somebody which in the day of inexperience one dreamed of being to all. It is, I assure you, a great encouragement to me, and of the kind that suits my temper best, for it will be a spur in the flank of my endeavor to deserve such gratitude. I have always had a profound contempt for what is called Public Opinion (that is, the judgment of the incapable Many as compared with that of the discerning Few), and a rooted dislike of notoriety, which, in this age of newspapers, is our German-silver substitute for real plate, and "in all respects as good as" the true thing — except that it is n't the true thing. But I am not insensible to such hearty sympathy as yours, and at fifty-six, after a life honestly devoted to what I conceived the true aims of literature, I may confess without vanity that it is very sweet to encounter a reader like you. None of my critics, I am sure, can be more keenly aware

than I of my manifold shortcomings, but I think I have done some things well, and I was pleased to find that you had read my essay on Dryden oftener than any other, for I believe it to be my best. This encouragement of yours has been a real help to me, for it has turned the scale of my decision not to be content with a critique of Wordsworth written twenty years ago (and which the hot weather had almost persuaded me to print with a little cobbling), but to rewrite it. So, if I make anything of it, I shall owe it to you in good measure, and shall feel so much the *less* in your debt — that does not strike you as inscrutable paradox, does it?

Let me counsel you to read a little German every day, and you will be surprised to find how soon it grows easy to you. Insist on knowing the exact meaning of every sentence, and use your grammar for that only. In this way you will insensibly grow familiar with the grammatical construction. I think a great deal of time is wasted in preliminary studies of grammar. Tumble into deep waters at once if you would learn to swim. German is the *open sesame* to a large culture, for it is the language of all others most pliable for the translation of other tongues, and everything has been rendered into it.

I am glad you have mountains to look out upon. My view is more limited, but is very



dear to me, for it is what my eyes first looked on, and I trust will look on last. A group of tall pines planted by my father, and my lifelong friends, murmurs to [me] as I write with messages out of the past and mysterious premonitions of the future. My wife's flowers recall her sweetly to me in her absence from home, and the leaves of her morning-glories that shelter the veranda where I sit whisper of her. A horse-chestnut, of which I planted the seed more than fifty years ago, lifts its huge stack of shade before me and loves me with all its leaves. I should be as happy as a humming-bird were I not printing another volume of essays. Everything I do seems so poor to me when I see it in print. But courage! there is a kindly reader in Baltimore who will find out some good in the book and thank me for it more than I deserve.

Not what we did, but what we meant to do,  
Lay in your scales, just Fates, and so decide.  
Alas, even then how much remains to rue!  
How little for our solace or our pride!

They frown and answer: "Only what is done  
We make account of; dreams may not be weighed,  
Nor with their down-shod feet the race is run,  
And reached at last the laurel's sacred shade."

I read your essay on the weather with much interest. Living in the country all my life, I

am a good weather-caster, and was pleased to find that I had discovered by my own observation that upper current you speak of. Thirty-four years ago, when you were a little girl, I was writing, —

Who heeds not how the lower gusts are working,

Knowing that one sure wind blows on above ;

and had observed that its current was from northwest to southeast, though I did not know why till you told me. . . .

P. S. I give you our latest weather-news. A fine thunderstorm is limbering up its guns in the southwest. . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, *September 21, 1875.*

. . . That I did not sooner answer your letter, was simply because for the last six weeks I have been rather unwell. I am now better, and surely a man of fifty-six who had never taken a pill till now has no great reason to repine. . . .

You ask me if I am an Episcopalian. No, though I prefer the service of the Church of England, and attend it from time to time. But I am not much of a church-goer, because I so seldom find any preaching that does not make me impatient and do me more harm than good. I confess to a strong lurch towards Calvinism (in some of its doctrines) that strengthens as I grow older. Perhaps it may be some consola-

tion to you that my mother was born and bred an Episcopalian. . . .

My essay on Wordsworth has been interrupted by my illness, which in some way confused my head so that I could not get on with it. I fear the essay when finished will show some marks of it. The mere physical exertion of writing makes me impatient. But after all, work of one kind or another is the only tonic for mind or character; . . . it makes me blush to think how dependent I am upon moods for the power to write with any hope of pleasing myself. I am just enough independent of literature as a profession to encourage this nicety (perhaps I should call it weakness) in me. Still I have the satisfaction of thinking that I have often worked hard when it was against the grain.

While I was most unwell, I could not find any reading that would seclude me from myself till one day I bethought me of Calderon. I took down a volume of his plays, and in half an hour was completely absorbed. He is surely one of the most marvellous of poets. I have recorded my debt to him in a poem, "The Nightingale in the Study." It is greater now, and I confess that the power of his charm interested me enough to make me think it might also interest you. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, *September 23, 1875.*

. . . For about a week I could read nothing but Calderon — a continual delight, like walking in a wood where there is a general sameness in the scenery and yet a constant vicissitude of light and shade, an endless variety of growth. He is certainly the most *delightful* of poets. Such fertility, such a gilding of the surfaces of things with fancy, or infusion of them with the more potent fires of imagination, such light-someness of humor! Even his tragedies somehow are not tragic to me, though terrible enough sometimes, for everybody has such a talent for being consoled, and that out of hand. Life with him is too short and too uncertain for sorrow to last longer than to the end of the scene, if so long. As Ate makes her exit she hands her torch to Hymen, who dances in brandishing it with an *Io!* The passions (some of the most unchristian of 'em) are made religious duties, which once fulfilled, you begin life anew with a clear conscience. . . .

*To R. S. Chilton*

ELMWOOD, *October 16, 1875.*

Dear Sir, — I *thought* I had answered your letter long ago as I ought, for I was much obliged to you for your kind remembrance of me and for

the photograph. But I was much worried during the spring and early summer by Centennials and things, and a heap of letters gathered ere I was aware under my bronze hen, till she looks as if [she had] been laying them ever since, and were now brooding on them with a fiendish hope of hatching out a clutch that shall hereafter pair and multiply.

I am glad you like my "Great Elm" poem. Occasional verses are always risky, and Centennials most of all, as being expected to have in them the pith and marrow of a hundred years. Then, too, in composing one is confronted with his audience, which he cannot help measuring by the dullest of his fellow-citizens, and this is far from inspiring. However, I seem to have escaped falling flat and shaming my worshippers — which was more than I could hope. The Concord poem was an improvisation written in the two days before the celebration, but the Cambridge one was composed amid all kinds of alien distractions.

Do you remember showing me, in Page's studio, more than thirty years ago, a pair of sleeve-buttons of Burns's? I hope you have them still. I have had a kind of poem about them buzzing in my head ever since. It is better there than it would be if I could open the window and chase it out of doors.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of these sleeve-buttons was afterwards given to Low-

I suppose you are a gray old boy by this time. I am just beginning to grizzle with the first hoar-frost. I have two grandsons, children of my only daughter and surviving child, fine boys both of them. They make me younger, I think.

I enclose a photograph taken two years ago in Rome by an amateur. It is, I believe, a tolerable *dead* likeness, and may serve to recall me to your memory. I am printing a new volume of essays, my work on which was broken off by an illness, the first (except gout) I ever had. But I am now for a few days mending rapidly. It was *liver*, and upset me utterly.

With all kindly remembrance,

Cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To Mrs. S. B. Herrick*

ELMWOOD, November 20, 1875.

The thought of your so long unanswered letter has been giving my conscience an unpleasant twinge for some time, but I anodyned it with the assurance that you would be too kind to misinterpret my silence. The truth is that I have been fussing over the volume I am printing, and fussing, too, without much progress, for my wits are clogged by not being yet quite ell ; it is now in the Cabinet of the Library of Harvard University.

recovered from my late illness. But I hope to be rid of my task (after a fashion) in a few days now. The book will contain essays on Dante, Spenser, Wordsworth, and shorter ones on Milton (criticism of an edition, rather than of the poet) and Keats.

. . . I am often struck with the fact that people of a sceptical turn, and who look upon all traditional faiths as broken reeds, are sure to lay hold of some private bulrush of credulity and fancy it an oak. For myself, I look upon a belief as none the worse but rather the better for being hereditary, prizing as I do whatever helps to give continuity to the being and doing of man, and an accumulated force to his character.

As for my coming to Baltimore, I fear it is out of the question, at least for the present. I have classes at the College three times a week and no long vacation till summer. At Christmas I always like to be by my own fireside, where a huge Yule-log always blazes. This year I shall be quite patriarchal, for my daughter with her husband and two boys will be with us. There is something wonderful in being a grandfather. It gives one a sense of almost tenderer paternity without the responsibilities that commonly wait upon it. . . .

*To R. W. Gilder*

ELMWOOD, December 15, 1875.

. . . As the sight of you four young lovers under my friend Norton's familiar pines transported me for a moment to a more innocent garden of Boccaccio, and prettily renewed for me my own youth and forward-looking days, so your little book has given me a pleasure the same in kind though more poignant in degree. I cannot praise it better than in saying that as I read I kept murmuring to myself, "It dallies with the innocence of love like the old age." Here and there I might shake my head (gray hairs, you know, have a trick of setting our heads ashake), but nearly all I liked and liked thoroughly. Your book is too subtle for the many, but the sense of lovers is finer and they will find it out. You will be the harmless Galeotto between many a dumb passion and itself.

But I know you are grumbling to yourself, "Why does he praise my verses and say nothing of *her* illustrations?" I could not help liking their grace and fancy. They seemed to me like flowers a lover had given his mistress and begged again, after she had worn them in her stomacher till they had caught some enchantment from their happy destiny. I thank you both for a great deal of pure pleasure that will last — as only pure pleasures do.



This is the first day I have had free of proof-sheets, or I should have written sooner. Cabbage-leaves and rose-leaves do not sort well together. Recall me, I pray you, to Mrs. Gilder's memory, and believe me

Very thankfully yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To Mrs. S. B. Herrick*

ELMWOOD, December 25, 1875.

. . . I am reading and commenting "Don Quixote" to the students, and in order to do it intelligently have been making a careful study of it over again. I am not sorry, for it has been a long pleasure, and when one is obliged to read with a microscope, one sees many things that would otherwise escape him. It is, indeed, a wonderful book, as full of good sense and good feeling as of profound, and therefore imperishable, humor.

I had hoped before this to have sent you my new book, but it hung long on my hands and is not yet out. You are so partial (one of the many excellent qualities in your sex) that I dare say you may not find it so tedious as it has been to me. But if you should be bored by it, I shall like you none the less.

Your industry amazes me, who am rather an unwilling writer, though I am one of the last (I fear) of the great readers. If I were to tell

how many hours a day I have studied, nobody would believe me except you. And the pitiful part of it is, that just when we are wise enough to profit by our accumulations our memory grows blurred, like the pencil entries in a note-book carried long in the pocket.

It is a gloomy Christmas day. Last night it snowed nobly for an hour or two and then turned to rain, and to-day is sullen with its disappointment. It is drizzling and freezing as it falls, and though the trees will look very pretty to-morrow if the sun shine, I never quite like it, because the trees always suffer, and I feel for them as my oldest friends.

I had expected my two grandsons to dinner, but the weather will not let them run the risk, so I am to have my old friend Mr. John Holmes (the best and most delightful of men), and a student whom I found to be without any chance at other than a dinner in Commons. . . .

*To the Same*

ELMWOOD, *January 17, 1876.*

. . . I sent you day before yesterday my new book, and that copy was the first I sent to any one, for I thought your partiality would perhaps find more pleasure in it than the rest of the world. I took such a disgust at it while it was passing through the press that I have not ventured to look into it since it was published. Yet,

though I could not (muddle-headed as I was all summer with illness) give it the order and proportion that I would, I think you will find something in it to like.

I go on in my usual routine, only varied by reading and commenting "Don Quixote" on Thursday evenings. An audience is apt to set me at cross-purposes with myself, but I am told that I give pleasure. . . .

*To Joel Benton*

ELMWOOD, *January 19, 1876.*<sup>1</sup>

Dear Sir,—I thank you for the manly way in which you put yourself at my side when I

<sup>1</sup> This letter was printed, with a Note by Mr. Benton, in the *Century* magazine for November, 1891. The following is a portion of Mr. Benton's Note : —

"On Mr. Lowell's return from Europe in 1875 he wrote two brief poems for the *Nation*, which were entitled respectively 'The World's Fair, 1876,' and 'Tempora Mutantur.' In these he described certain dangerous symptoms of the body politic. . . . The following lines are a fair sample of the tone and direction of the poems. Mr. Lowell, speaking for Brother Jonathan, recommends the exhibition of some of our political inventions of that day.

" " Show 'em your Civil Service, and explain  
How all men's loss is everybody's gain ;  
Show your new patent to increase your rents  
By paying quarters for collecting cents ;  
Show your short cut to cure financial ills  
By making paper-collars current bills ;  
Show your new bleaching-process, cheap and brief,  
To wit : a jury chosen by the thief ;

had fallen among thieves, still more for the pithy and well-considered words with which you confirm and maintain my side of the quarrel. At my time of life one is not apt to vex his soul at any criticism, but I confess that in this

Show your State legislatures ; show your Rings ;  
And challenge Europe to produce such things  
As high officials sitting half in sight  
To share the plunder and to fix things right ;  
If that don't fetch her, why, you only need  
To show your latest style in martyrs — Tweed :  
She 'll find it hard to hide her spiteful tears  
At such advance in one poor hundred years.'

“ In ‘ *Tempora Mutantur* ’ occur these lines: —

“ ‘ A hundred years ago,  
If men were knaves, why, people called them so,  
And crime could see the prison-portal bend  
Its brow severe at no long vista's end ;  
In those days for plain things plain words would serve :  
Men had not learned to admire the graceful swerve  
Wherewith the *Æsthetic Nature's* genial mood  
Makes public duty slope to private good.

But now that “ *Statesmanship* ” is just a way  
To dodge the primal curse and make it pay,  
Since Office means a kind of patent drill  
To force an entrance to the Nation's till,  
And speculation something rather less  
Risky than if you spelt it with an *s* ;

With generous curve we draw the moral line :  
Our swindlers are permitted to resign ;  
Their guilt is wrapped in deferential names,  
And twenty sympathize for one that blames.

The public servant who has stolen or lied,  
If called on, may resign with honest pride :  
As unjust favor put him in, why doubt  
Disfavor as unjust has turned him out ?

case I was more than annoyed, I was even saddened. For what was said was so childish and showed such shallowness, such levity, and such dulness of apprehension both in politics and morals on the part of those who claim to direct public opinion (as, alas ! they too often do) as to confirm me in my gravest apprehensions. I believe "The World's Fair" gave the greatest offence. They had not even the wit to see that I put my sarcasm into the mouth of Brother Jonathan, thereby implying and mean-

Even if indicted, what is that but fudge  
To him who counted-in the elective judge ?  
Whitewashed, he quits the politician's strife,  
At ease in mind, with pockets filled for life.'

"These caustic lines awakened resentment. A large proportion of the press (and particularly that part of it which was of his own political faith) pursued him with no polite epithets, and with not a little persistence. It was charged that he was no true American ; that he was, in fact, a snob ; that he had elbowed against dukes and lords so much and so long that he could not any longer tolerate Democracy. And for many weeks this and other equally puerile nonsense went on unrebuked.

"It occurred to me at last to say what was obvious, and record my sympathy with Mr. Lowell's position. That his character and motives were above all need of defence I knew, but such a shocking perversion of his ideas and intentions was altogether too flagrant to pass unnoticed. I therefore took up the cudgels for what seemed to me to be true ; and, under the title of 'Mr. Lowell's Recent Political Verse,' volunteered, in the *Christian Union* of December 15, 1875, a defence of his friendly chidings."

ing to imply that the common-sense of my countrymen was awakening to the facts, and that *therefore* things were perhaps not so desperate as they seemed.

I had just come home from a two years' stay in Europe, so it was discovered that I had been corrupted by association with foreign aristocracies ! I need not say to you that the society I frequented in Europe was what it is at home — that of my wife, my studies, and the best nature and art within my reach. But I confess that I was embittered by my experience. Wherever I went I was put on the defensive. Whatever extracts I saw from American papers told of some new fraud or defalcation, public or private. It was sixteen years since my last visit abroad, and I found a very striking change in the feeling towards America and Americans. An Englishman was everywhere treated with a certain deference : Americans were at best tolerated. The example of America was everywhere urged in France as an argument against republican forms of government. It was fruitless to say that the people were still sound when the Body Politic which draws its life from them showed such blotches and sores. I came home, and instead of wrath at such abominations, I found banter. I was profoundly shocked, for I had received my earliest impressions in a community the most virtuous, I believe, that ever existed. . . .

On my return I found that community struggling half hopelessly to prevent General Butler from being put in its highest office against the will of all its best citizens. I found Boutwell, one of its senators, a chief obstacle to Civil-Service reform (our main hope). . . . I saw Banks returned by a larger majority than any other member of the lower house. . . . In the Commonwealth that built the first free school and the first college, I heard culture openly derided. I suppose I like to be liked as well as other men. Certainly I would rather be left to my studies than meddle with politics. But I had attained to some consideration, and my duty was plain. I wrote what I did in the plainest way, that he who ran might read, and that I hit the mark I aimed at is proved by the attacks against which you so generously defend me. These fellows have no notion what love of country means. It is in my very blood and bones. If I am not an American, who ever was?

I am no pessimist, nor ever was, . . . but is not the Beecher horror disheartening? Is not Delano discouraging? and Babcock atop of him? . . . What fills me with doubt and dismay is the degradation of the moral tone. Is it or is it not a result of Democracy? Is ours a "government of the people by the people for the people," or a Kakistocracy rather, for the benefit of knaves at the cost of fools? Demo-

cracy is, after all, nothing more than an experiment like another, and I know only one way of judging it — by its results. Democracy in itself is no more sacred than monarchy. It is Man who is sacred ; it is his duties and opportunities, not his rights, that nowadays need reinforcement. It is honor, justice, culture, that make liberty invaluable, else worse than worthless if it mean only freedom to be base and brutal. As things have been going lately, it would surprise no one if the officers who had Tweed in charge should demand a reward for their connivance in the evasion of that popular hero. I am old enough to remember many things, and what I remember I meditate upon. My opinions do not live from hand to mouth. And so long as I live I will be no writer of birthday odes to King Demos any more than I would be to King Log, nor shall I think *our* cant any more sacred than any other. Let us all work together (and the task will need us all) to make Democracy possible. It certainly is no invention to go of itself any more than the perpetual motion.

Forgive me for this long letter of justification, which I am willing to write for your friendly eye, though I should scorn to make any public defence. Let the tenor of my life and writings defend me.

Cordially yours,

J. R. LOWELL.



*To Edward P. Bliss*

ELMWOOD, April 4, 1876

Dear Sir, — Though I don't think the function you wish me to perform quite in my line, I am willing to do *anything* which may be thought helpful in a movement of which I heartily approve. I am not so hopeful, I confess, as I was thirty years ago ; yet, if there be any hope, it is in getting independent thinkers to be independent voters.

Very truly yours,

J. R. LOWELL.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bliss has favored me with the following statement, explanatory of the preceding letter : “ In the spring of 1876 some young men in Cambridge were not contented with the tendencies in the Republican party. We had a meeting in one of the rooms in Stoughton Hall, and planned to call a larger meeting, inviting about sixty citizens, at which we could better determine how to help right our politics. I was directed to invite Professor Lowell to preside at the proposed meeting. I received from him the foregoing letter.

“ At this meeting Mr. Lowell advised with us very seriously, and the result was that we organized a committee of forty, eight from each ward, to see that we had fair caucuses. At that time the Boston Custom-House officials were used to managing all our caucuses, and just then they wanted to secure delegates favorable to Mr. Blaine's nomination. Mr. Lowell was elected president of the whole committee. The caucuses in all wards were so well looked after by these amateurs in politics that anti-Blaine delegates were chosen, to the surprise of the Custom-House men. At Jamaica Plain

*To Leslie Stephen*

ELMWOOD, April 10, 1876.

. . . Last night I appeared in a new capacity as chairman of a political meeting, where I fear I made an ass of myself. It was got up by young men who wish to rouse people to their duty in attending caucuses and getting them out of the hands of professionals. I have n't much hope (one has rounded that cape by the time he is fifty), but am willing to try anything. We have got to work back from a democracy to our original institution as a republic again. Our present system has resulted in our being governed by a secret and irresponsible club called the United States Senate for their own private benefit. Our Republican newspapers seem to find a strange consolation in the vile character of the witnesses against our more illustrious swindlers ; but how are we to get over the fact that, however rotten and perjured these rascals may be, they were all in the confidential employment of the very men who try to discredit there was a similar committee. We were in the same district then. Members of their committee arranged with some of us that at the district convention we would try to send as delegates to Cincinnati the presidents of the two committees, who were the Rev. Dr. James F. Clarke and Professor J. R. Lowell. We were successful. Mr. Lowell was a new personage in active politics, and as delegate and afterwards presidential elector drew special attention."

them? I think the row is likely to do good, however, in getting us better candidates in the next presidential election, and waking everybody up to the screaming necessity of reform in our Civil Service. It does n't cheer me much to be told that it was just as bad in England under Sir Robert Walpole. In the first place, it was n't, and, in the second, suppose it was? . . .

*To Mrs. S. B. Herrick*

ELMWOOD, April 19, 1876.

. . . But I did not tell you the worst. Horace confesses that he was stout, or at any rate implies it. Thomson says plumply that he was *fat* — an odious word. I suppose Coleridge would have admitted a certain amiable rotundity of presence. Byron wrestled with increasing flesh, as it had been well for him to do against growing fleshliness. But such is the weakness of our poor human nature that never one of them could bring himself to the shameful confession that he had lost his *waist*. There is the tender spot, and I claim a certain amount of admiration when I admit that *mine* has been growing more and more obscure (like many a passage in Browning) for several years. Now, a waist is as important in a poet's economy as in a woman's. But this is too sad a topic. You see I disenchant you by instalments — and,

how shall I say it? I am writing at this moment with spectacles (not *nippers*, mind you, but the steel-bowed deformity which pale young parsons love) across my prosaic nose. It is horrible, but it is true. I have, to be sure, the saving grace of being still a little touchy about them, and have never yet allowed any of the servants to see me in my debasement. *Nippers* have still a pretension of foppishness about them, and he who is foppish has not yet abandoned the last stronghold of youth, or, if he has, he at least marches out with the honors of war. I have laid down my arms. That steel bow is Romance's Caudine Forks. I used to have the eye of a hawk, and a few days ago I mistook a flight of snow-birds for English sparrows! Have you still the courage to come? If you have, we shall be all the gladder to see you, and I will make you welcome to whatever I have contrived to save from the wreck of myself. Age makes Robinson Crusoes of the best of us, and makes us ingenious in contrivances and substitutes, but what cunning expedient will ever replace youth? In one respect only I have lost nothing. I think I am as great a fool as ever, and that is no small comfort. I believe, too, that I still feel the blind motions of spring in my veins with the same sense of *prickle* as trees do, for I suppose their sense of April must be very much like ours when a

limb that has been asleep, as we call it, is fumbling after its suspended sensation again.

Are you a stout walker? If you are, I will show you my oaks while you are here. If you are not, I will still contrive to make you acquainted with them in some more ignominious way. They will forgive you, I dare say, for the sake of so old a friend as I. Besides, they are no great pedestrians themselves unless, like Shelley's Apennine, they walk abroad in the storm. We have n't much to show here. We are a flat country, you know, but not without our charm, and I love Nature, I confess, not to be always on her high horse and with her tragic mask on. Bostonians generally (I am not a Bostonian) seem to have two notions of hospitality — a dinner with people you never saw before nor ever wish to see again, and a drive in Mount Auburn cemetery, where you will see the worst man can do in the way of disfiguring nature. Your memory of the dinner is expected to reconcile you to the prospect of the graveyard. But I am getting treasonable.

Now to business. You must let me know in good season when you are coming, because I wish to make sure of some pleasant people for you to meet. Don't come till May, if you can help it, for our spring is backward and we don't do ourselves justice yet. But come at any rate. . . .

*To H. W. Longfellow*

ELMWOOD, May 3, 1876.

Dear Longfellow, — Will you dine with me on Saturday at six? I have a Baltimore friend coming, and depend on you.

I had such a pleasure yesterday that I should like to share it with you to whom I owed it. J. R. Osgood & Co. sent me a copy of your Household Edition to show me what it was, as they propose one of me. I had been reading over with dismay my own poems to weed out the misprints, and was awfully disheartened to find how bad they (the poems) were. Then I took up your book to see what the type was, and before I knew it I had been reading two hours and more. I never wondered at your popularity, nor thought it wicked in you; but if I *had* wondered, I should no longer, for you sang me out of all my worries. To be sure they came back when I opened my own book again — but that was no fault of yours.

If not Saturday, will you say Sunday? My friend is a Mrs. S. B. Herrick, and a very nice person indeed.

Yours always,

J. R. L.

*To Leslie Stephen*

ELMWOOD, May 15, 1876.

. . . *Have* I read your book? <sup>1</sup> I wish you had read it so carefully, for then I should not have a string of *errata* to send you for your next edition, the first of them peculiarly exasperating, because it spoils one of Browne's most imaginative passages, a passage I never think of without a thrill. It is on page 40, where "dreams." has usurped the place of "drums." . . . I may be partial, though I don't think I am, and even were I, towards whom have I a better privilege of partiality than towards you? To be sure, I could not help being constantly reminded of you as I read; but that surely is a chief merit of the book, proving it to be distinctively yours and nobody's else. I *was* especially interested in Jonathan Edwards, with whom (except in his physical notions of hell) I have a great sympathy — a case of *reversion*, I suppose, to some Puritan ancestor. If he had only conceived of damnation as a spiritual state, the very horror of which consists (to our deeper apprehension) in its being delightful to who is in it, I could go along with him altogether. What you say of his isolation is particularly good, and applies to American literature more or less even yet. We lack the stimulus

<sup>1</sup> *Hours in a Library.*

whether of rivalry or sympathy. I liked your estimate of Browne very much. It is very subtle and appreciative, though I think you misapprehend the scope of the "Pseudodoxia" a little. Browne was Montaigne's truest disciple, and his deference to certain superstitions is greatly analogous to old Michel's pilgrimage to Loreto. He always assumes the air of a believer the more devoutly when he is about to hint something especially unorthodox. Always sceptical, he makes us feel the absurdities of the vulgar faith by setting forth some monstrous deduction that may be drawn from them. Take the passage you quote from the "Religio," on pages 23-24, for example. In the "Pseudodoxia" Browne is always scattering (as it seems to me) the seeds of scepticism, though the bags that contain them are all carefully labelled "Herb of Grace." But I may be wrong, for I speak from a long-agone general impression, not having studied Browne much for a good many years. I was glad of your kind word for good old Crabbe, which was very just and discriminating. I thank you also for your *Rettung* (as Lessing would have called it) of Horace Walpole. The "Hazlitt," too, though you rate him higher than I should, strikes me as very good. In the whole book there is a union of impartial good sense and sensibility of appreciation that is very rare in criticism. And



then there are charity and modesty. I read it straight through at a sitting and wished there had been more, and not because it was yours, but because I was interested. But because it was yours, I am heartily glad it is so good. I am impatient for your other book.<sup>1</sup> It is on a capital subject and I am sure it will be ably handled.

I have published another volume, and I ought long ago to have sent you a copy, but I took a disgust at it so soon as I saw it in print. I was really ill all the time it was going through the press, so that I sometimes could not even read a proof for weeks, and had to put in at random some things I would rather have left for a posthumous edition of my works (if I ever have one), when people read with kinder eyes. But I will post you a copy soon.

Thank you for the plan.<sup>2</sup> I shall be able to fancy you now very well in your new house, for I remember all that neighborhood well, and it is already associated with you, since I used to pass it in my way to Southwell Gardens. I am glad to think that little Laura will be so near a good playground and something like the country. I fear you will not have a study I shall like so well as that *Stylites* one on

<sup>1</sup> *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century.*

<sup>2</sup> Of Mr. Stephen's new house, for which Lowell had asked.

the top of your other house, which I know so thoroughly. It was the one place in the wilderness of London where I felt thoroughly at home. I was somehow an American everywhere else, but there I was a friend, and so far, you know, it was a foretaste of heaven.

I did n't mean any reproach (but then you would n't have thought I did) in what I said about Providence, whatever it was. I don't meddle with what my friends believe or reject, any more than I ask whether they are rich or poor. I love *them*. I sometimes think they will smile (as Dante makes St. Gregory) when they open their eyes in the other world. And so doubtless shall I, for I have no Murray or Baedeker for those parts. I don't think a view of the universe from the stocks of any creed a very satisfactory one. But I continue to shut my eyes resolutely in certain speculative directions, and am willing to find solace in certain intimations that seem to me from a region higher than my reason. When they tell me that I can't *know* certain things, I am apt to wonder how *they* can be sure of that, and whether there may not be things which they *can't* know. I went through my reaction so early and so violently that I have been settling backward towards equilibrium ever since. As I can't be certain, I won't be positive, and would n't drop some chapters of the Old Testament, even, for

all the science that ever undertook to tell me what it does n't know. They go about to prove to me from a lot of nasty savages that conscience is a purely artificial product, as if that was n't the very wonder of it. What odds whether it is the thing or the aptitude that is innate? What race of beasts ever got one up in all their leisurely æons?

Our spring is very cold and backward, though peaches, pears, and cherries are grudgingly blooming. I hope yours is more generous, for I think May sovereign for an inward wound. I can't recollect whether you know the Gurneys, who are now in London. If not, I must have given them a letter. You will like them in every way. They are delighted with dear Old England.

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. LOWELL.

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, July 3, 1876.

. . . What can I tell you about Cincinnati? The journey impressed me, as a journey in America always does, with the wonderful richness and comfort of the country, and with the distinctive Americanism that is moulding into one type of feature and habits so many races that had widely diverged from the same original stock. Is the West to reproduce the primitive

Aryan who wandered out of the East so long ago? One gets also an impression of size which enables one to sympathize with his countrymen (as I love to do) in the mere bigness of the country. These immense spaces, tremulous with the young grain, trophies of individual, or at any rate of unorganized courage and energy, of the people and not of dynasties, were to me inexpressibly impressive and even touching. The whole landscape had a neighborly air, such as I feel in no other country. The men who have done and are doing these things know how things *should be* done, and will find some way, I am sure, of bringing the country back to business principles. It was very interesting, also, to meet men from Kansas and Nevada and California, to see how manly and intelligent they were, and especially what large heads they had. They had not the manners of Vere de Vere, perhaps, but they had an independence and self-respect which are the prime element of fine bearing. I think I never (not even in Germany) sat at meat with so many men who used their knives as shovels, nor with so many who were so quiet and self-restrained in their demeanor. The Westerners, especially, may be Grangers, or what you will (it won't be the first case in history where self-interest has blinded men to the rights of others—nor the last), but you feel that they have the unmistakable makings of

*men* in them. They were less sensitive to the offences of Blaine than I could have wished, but I suspect that few of our Boston men who have had to do with Western railways have been more scrupulous. I rather think they set the example of tempting legislators with the hope of questionable gains.

I am glad you liked Stephen's article as well as I did. It seems to me, on the whole, the best thing I have read about Macaulay, doing more justice than the rest to the essential manliness and Britishism of his character. Morley's paper seemed to me altogether too *a priori* and Teutonically abstruse. He was so profound that he dug under his subject rather than into it, and I confess the universe is so brutally indifferent to *us*, that I am not greatly interested in the discussion of any particular man's relation to it. That very small arc of it which the eye of man (however tall) can grasp is enough for me. . . .

*To Mrs. S. B. Herrick*

ELMWOOD, July 4, 1876.

. . . You must be beginning to think me the most inconstant of men to have left your last letter so long without an answer. But the explanation of it is simple enough, though women, I believe, are so wise as never to be satisfied with an explanation, because the need of one can never be explained. I meant to have written to

you from Cincinnati, whither I went in the hope of helping to get Mr. Bristow nominated as the Republican candidate. There, I thought, I should have plenty of spare time, and plenty of new and amusing things to tell you about. But I had no leisure, the weather was stewing hot, and I spent all the intervals of business in trying to make myself clean with a very stingy supply of water, for the blacks of their coal-smoke stick faster than the most scriptural brother. I was wholly demoralized by the unwonted color of my finger-nails, and kept my fists carefully doubled to hide them lest I should be mistaken for a partisan of —, the dirtiness of whose hands seemed rather an argument in his favor with many. I had little hope before I went of Mr. Bristow's nomination, but desired it greatly because he had shown himself a practical reformer, and because I believed that a Kentucky candidate might at least give the starting-point for a party at the South whose line of division should be other than sectional, and by which the natural sympathy between reasonable and honest men at the North and the South should have a fair chance to reassert itself. We failed, but at least succeeded in preventing the nomination of a man whose success in the Convention (he would have been beaten disastrously at the polls) would have been a lesson to American youth that selfish partisanship is a set-off

for vulgarity of character and obtuseness of moral sense. I am proud to say that it was New England that defeated the New England candidate.

I hope you are as far away from the noises of this boisterous anniversary as I. I was asked to write an ode for the celebration at Taunton, where Mr. C. F. Adams is to deliver the oration. But the Muse was unwilling, and I would not condescend to the mechanical compromise of a hymn with verses set stiffly as pins in a paper, but, unlike them, of a non-conducting material. It is no use setting traps for inspiration till the right bait shall have been discovered. With the thermometer at 90° in the shade, I am, on the whole, glad I was n't inspired.

Since you were here I have changed my quarters, and moved out of the library into the room in front of it, where a long window gives me more breeze, and where I shall have the morning sun in winter, which I crave more as I grow older. When you come again, I hope you will like me as well in my new refuge as in the old. But perhaps by this time my silence has vexed you enough to make you reconsider your good opinion of me altogether?

I am writing to cannon music, for the noon salutes are just booming in every direction, and with something of the effect of a general engagement. Women, I think, are quiet when

they are happiest, and can stitch their superfluous exhilaration into a seam, but the coarser fibre of men demands an immense amount of noise to make it vibrate and convince them they are happy. Or is it that uproar deadens reflection, and that in the confusion they escape arrest by that consciousness of the futility of things in general which is so saddening? However it be, I am glad the nearest guns are a mile away from me. I remember how, fifty years ago to-day, I, perched in a great oxheart cherry tree, long ago turned to mould, saw my father come home with the news of John Adams's death. I wish I could feel, as I did then, that we were a chosen people, with a still valid claim to divine interpositions. It is from an opposite quarter that most of our providences seem to come now. But those peaceful fields that rimmed the railway all the way to Cincinnati, trophies of honest toil, and somehow looking more neighborly than in other lands, were a great consolation and encouragement to me. Here was a great gain to the sum of human happiness, at least, however it be with the higher and nobler things that make a country truly inhabitable. Will they come in time, or is Democracy doomed by its very nature to a dead level of commonplace? At any rate, our experiment of inoculation with freedom is to run its course through all Christendom, with what result the wisest cannot pre-



dict. Will it only insure safety from the more dangerous disease of originality? . . .

*To Thomas Hughes*

ELMWOOD, July 12, 1876.

Dear old Friend, — . . . I have taken my first practical dip into politics this summer, having been sent by my neighbors first to the State Convention and then to the National at Cincinnati. I am glad I went, for I learned a great deal that may be of service to me hereafter. You are wrong about Hayes; he was neither unknown nor even unexpected as a probable nominee. He was not adopted as a compromise in any true sense of the word, but as an unimpeachably honest man, and the only one on whom we could unite to defeat Blaine, who had all the party machinery at his disposal. The nomination of the latter would have been a national calamity — the most costly tub of whitewash yet heard of. For, really, a large part of the feeling in his favor was an honest (though mistaken) feeling of indignation at a partisan persecution, for such he had cunningly contrived to make the inquiry into his stock-jobbing proceedings appear. His nomination might have done good in one way — by leading to the formation of a new party based simply on reform. Such a party would have been certainly formed, and I should not have regretted it, for

I very much doubt the possibility of purifying either of the old ones from within. There is very little to choose between them; though, so far as the South is concerned, I rather sympathize with the Democrats. The whole condition of things at the South is shameful, and I am ready for a movement now to emancipate the whites. No doubt the government is bound to protect the misintelligence of the blacks, but surely not at the expense of the intelligence of the men of our own blood. The South, on the whole, has behaved better than I expected, but our extremists expect them to like being told once a week that they have been *licked*. The war was fought through for nationality; for that and nothing more. That was both the ostensible and the real motive. Emancipation was a very welcome incident of the war, and nothing more.

Ever since '65 the Republican party has done its best (I mean its leaders, for selfish ends) to make our victory nugatory, so far as Reunion was concerned. The people I believe to be perfectly sound, and as honest (if not more so) as any other on the earth. But it takes a great while for the people to have its way. There is a good deal of blundering at first, a good deal of righteous wrath that misses its mark, but in the long run we shall win.

I think the intelligence of the country is

decidedly on the Republican side, and cannot quite get over my distrust of the Democracy, which is mainly to blame for our political corruption.

In England you are misled by your free-trade notions in your judgment of the two parties here. (I don't mean you personally.) Free trade has nothing to hope from either of them, and perhaps the most ardent free-traders are Republicans, but we shall have no free trade till our debt is cancelled.

Our real weak point is in Congress, and your zealous enlargers of the suffrage had better think twice. I think we shall gradually get better men, but it will be a slow business. I myself have been asked to stand in my district, but do not see my way clear to so very great a sacrifice. I am hopeful of purification, but not sanguine.

Emerson is well, but visibly aging. He was not at our Commencement this year, the first time I have ever missed him there. He is as sweetly high-minded as ever, and when one meets him the Fall of Adam seems a false report. Afterwards we feel of our throats, and are startled by the tell-tale lump there. John Holmes is well, and delightful as usual. He is lame again just now, but it does not make him blue as formerly. I wish we could have you here again. We have a new veranda on the north side, which is a great success. (I enclose a print.)

I had hoped for you during the Centennial year. We are taking it gravely, I am glad to see, and rather incline to be thoughtful than bumptious. I wish your queen (or empress) would have had the grace to write a letter. It would have done good, and we would rather have had one from her than from all your Wilhelms and Vittorio Emanueles together. . . .

*September 24, 1876.*

P. S. You will see by the date of my other sheet that it was written more than two months ago. I wrote that I should enclose a print, and found that the magazine containing it had been given away. So that very day I ordered another of our periodical-dealer (as we call a newsman here) and he promised to get one at once, adding that he wished for a copy himself also, as it contained an article on Cambridge. At intervals ever since I have asked for it and never got it, but am always told by the merchant of news that he wants one himself. It tickles me as one of the last samples to be found of a certain Constantinopolitan way of doing business which used to be characteristic of the Cambridge of my boyhood.

Politics have not changed much since I wrote — only the worst element of the Republican party has got hold of the canvass, and everything possible is done to stir up the old passions of the war. Of course I with all sensible men hate

this, but our protest is drowned in the drums and trumpets of a presidential election. On the whole, I shall vote for Hayes, and the best judges think his election the likelier of the two. But there will be a strong reaction from the violences of the contest now going on, and Congress will be more in opposition with the executive than ever. The same thing will happen if Tilden comes in, for the Democratic party is very hungry for place, and their professions of reform will be severely tested. Now, as the good men of both parties are honest reformers, I think we shall gradually get an independent party, and then the country will divide on rational issues, such as currency and tariff. Faith in democratical forms of government will be painfully strained in many minds if Butler should carry eastern Massachusetts, as he probably will. I shall still think them, however, as nearly ideal as some other ways of doing clumsily what might be done well. It will go hard with me to vote against Mr. Adams here at home,<sup>1</sup> and perhaps, if things go on from bad to worse, I shan't. But I cannot easily bring myself to trust the Democrats. His nomination has had one odd (and good) effect here in dividing the Irish vote. The Fenians regard him as an

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Charles F. Adams, late U. S. Minister at the Court of St. James, was the candidate of the Democratic party for governor.

enemy of Ireland, because he did his duty as ambassador, so the Irish Democratic orators are laboring to convince their countrymen that a man can't have two countries at once, though most of 'em see nothing wonderful in Sir Boyle Roche's bird.

If I ever get the print I will send it, for we are rather proud of our new veranda, which longingly awaits you. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, *August 6, 1876.*

. . . You should see me in my new study, with the arches wide open into the library, as we shall call it. . . .

Now can I taste the pleasures of retreat;  
Days loitering idly with snow-silent feet,  
Truants of Time, to-morrow like to-day,  
That come unbought, and claimless glide away  
By shelves that sun them in the indulgent Past,  
Where Ill hath ceased or turned to song at last.

Tell Charles that these verses are adapted from a poem I told him I was writing. And, lest I never finish them, I will copy a bit or two more : —

Oh, as this pensive moonlight blurs my pines  
(Here as I sit and meditate these lines)  
To gray-green dreams of what they are by day,  
So would some light, not reason's clear-edged ray,  
Trance me in moonshine, as before the blight  
Of years had brought the fatal gift of sight

That sees things as they are, or will be soon,  
In the frank prose of undissembling noon !

Are we not changed ? Is this the Senate now  
Where Clay once flashed, and Webster's cloudy brow  
Brooded those bolts of thought that blazing flew,  
And whose long echoes all the horizon knew ?

I think that will do for once. Tell Charles, also, that copying the first passage brought back to my memory the inscription on a dial which I fished for vainly the other night. It is *Pereunt et imputantur*. The *Horas non numero nisi serenas* is epicurean, but this other is *gnomic*, and therefore more suitable to a sun-dial. . . .

By the way, don't translate *pereunt* (in the dial epigram) by *perish*. Any fool might do that. It has the literal meaning which we have lost. "They go by and are charged to our account," as I ought to know if anybody, for I have thrown away hours enough to have made a handsome reputation out of. I am an ass, but then I know it, and *that* kind (a rare species), though pastured on east wind and thistles like the rest, do yet wear their ears with a difference. . . .

*To W. D. Howells*

ELMWOOD, August 9, 1876.

Dear Howells, — You are very kind to my verses, but I can stand it, especially as what you say applies to a much younger fellow than I,

twenty years younger, in fact, and who had not yet been tripped up by a professor's gown. . . .

I have been trifling with foolish epigrams lately. Here is one I made last night as I lay awake :—

#### A DIALOGUE

“ Jones owns a silver mine.” “ Pray, who is Jones ?  
 Don't vex my ears with horrors like *Jones owns !* ”  
 “ Why, Jones is Senator, and so he strives  
 To make us buy his ingots all our lives  
 At a stiff premium on the market price :  
 A silver currency would be so nice ! ”  
 “ What 's Jones's plan ? ” “ A coinage, to be sure,  
 To rise and fall with Wall Street's temperature.  
 You wish to treat the crowd : Your dollar shrinks  
 Undreamed percentums while they mix the drinks.”  
 “ Jones' mine 's quicksilver, then ? ” “ Your wit won't pass ;  
 His coin 's mercurial, but his mine is brass.  
 Jones owns ” — “ Again ! Your iteration 's worse  
 Than the slow torture of an echo-verse.  
 I'll tell you one thing Jones won't own : that is,  
 That the cat hid beneath the meal is his.”

You see I am getting old. The compliment I paid you to-day is no sign of it, however. I had all your books catalogued with my library to-day. “ Howells,” said I to the young man who is doing the work for me, “ is going to last. He knows how to write.” If you notice the poetry from the “ Harvard Advocate,” pat him on the back. His name is Woodberry, and his “ Violet Crown ” is a far cry beyond anything else in the volume. I hope the country



air is doing lots of good to Mrs. Howells and the weans. As for you, you are already, like dear old Jemmy Thomson, more fat than bard beseems, though God knows you don't dwell in the Castle of Indolence. . . .

*To C. E. Norton*

ELMWOOD, *Monday Night, August 21, 1876.*

. . . I received a deputation this evening to persuade me to reconsider my refusal to stand for Congress. They tell me I am the only candidate with whom the Republicans can carry the district, that they have thoroughly canvassed it and are sure that I should be elected without the need of any effort, that no one else could get the nomination against Claflin, but that I should have it by acclamation. I confess that I was profoundly touched by this testimony of my neighbors, but did not yield. They strove to make me see it as my duty, but I cannot. I will confess to you that I was never so surprised in my life, for I had not looked on my candidacy as serious. The members of this delegation were not even known to me by sight — except one, whom I remembered at our ward caucus. As Sumner said at our club, "This is *history*, and you had better listen to it!" (He was talking of himself.) I compare myself (*facendo questo gran rifiuto*) to Cæsar and Cromwell on a like occasion. . . .

*To Miss Norton*

ELMWOOD, October 2, 1876.

. . . I have been again urged to stand for Congress (only yesterday), and again wisely declined. I beat Cæsar and Cromwell and the other historical examples, who only put aside the offered crown thrice, and this is my half-dozen self-denial. The truth is, and I have frankly told 'em so, that I should not make half so good a member as they think. They think not, but I *know* it.

Term has begun, and I think I shall enjoy my classes. I begin in a more cheerful mood than usual, though rather in the dumps about politics, which have taken a turn all through the canvass much to my distaste, and now all this end of the State seems likely to be given over, by bargain and sale, into the hands of the regular old set of corruptionists. Even in this district they mean to force on us as candidate for Congress the man who presided at a reception of Blaine the other night. I preserve my equanimity, but am losing my temper. . . .

. . . I trust your native air will set you on your feet again. There is nothing like it, I think, in spite of the strong taint of Butlerism just now. But think how many times the world has been ruined and got over it so bravely. I am more alarmed at what they say of the sun's

cooling. It takes the very rowels from the spur of noble minds. For what is a beggarly twenty million of years? I lose all interest in literature. Let us write for immediate applause — and done with it. . . .

*To Mrs. S. B. Herrick*

ELMWOOD, October 9, 1876.

Dear Mrs. Herrick, — I have n't been forgetting you all this while, but all kinds of pre-occupations of one kind and another (including politics) have not conduced to the untrammelled mood of mind which is the main condition of agreeable letter-writing. I am worried about the turn the canvass has been taking, and while too full of traditional and well-founded doubts of the Democratic party to be a willing helper in the success of its candidates, an equal distrust of the present managers of the Republican party hinders me from giving any cordial support to that. Whichever way I look I see cause of reasonable anxiety, and since, as you know, I do not value even my own opinions till they are rooted in experience and have weathered the blasts of argument, I am slow in making up my mind. About one thing I am settled, and that is that the reviving of old animosities for a temporary purpose (and that, too, a selfish one), the doing evil that a problematical good may come of it, is nothing short of wicked. The good

hoped for is questionable and at best temporary, while the harm is of the most far-reaching consequence. We are deliberately trying to make an Ireland of the South, by perpetuating misgovernment there. Scotland, instead of being as now quite as loyal as any part of Britain, might easily have been made what Ireland is by the same treatment. I don't know whether the Mr. Lamar whose speech I have read be the friend of whom I have heard you speak, but if so, I congratulate you in having at least one friend who is both an able man and a wise one, if indeed the one quality do not necessarily imply the other.

I think I wrote to you about my change of quarters. I am in the front room now, with a bright October sun shining in on me as I write, and I dare say it was the sense of cheerfulness that reminded me of you, for we found you all sunshine while you were with us. When the sun gives out (as you awful scientific people tell us it will one of these days) I shall turn to you for a spare pinch of warmth now and then — if the catastrophe take place in my time. . . .

*To R. W. Gilder*

ELMWOOD, November 29, 1876.

. . . I have read the review of "Deirdré"<sup>1</sup> you were good enough to send me, and think it

<sup>1</sup> "Deirdré," a poem by the late Dr. R. D. Joyce.

kindly and discriminating. I read the poem in manuscript, and recommended it for publication on the ground of the freshness and force which gave it a sincere originality, in spite of an obvious external likeness to Morris. Of course I never spoke of it as I hear I have been represented as speaking. At my age one has no more extravagant opinions — or keeps them for his own amusement.

Thank you for the kind things you say of my ode. I value highly the sympathy of one who is qualified to judge and who works in the same spirit in which I try to work, though in a different line. . . .

*To Leslie Stephen*

ELMWOOD, December 4, 1876.

. . . I have received your book<sup>1</sup> and hasten to thank you for it — not, however, before reading it with the attention it deserves. I thank you also for the Crabbe, for which I must be indebted to somebody in good shillings and pence, but no bill came with it. Will you kindly find out for me what I owe and to whom? Your book interested me profoundly and instructed me as much as it interested. . . . Yet I was conscious of you (and this was very pleasant) all the while I read. Some of your *obiter dicta* tickled me immensely by their wit and keenness.

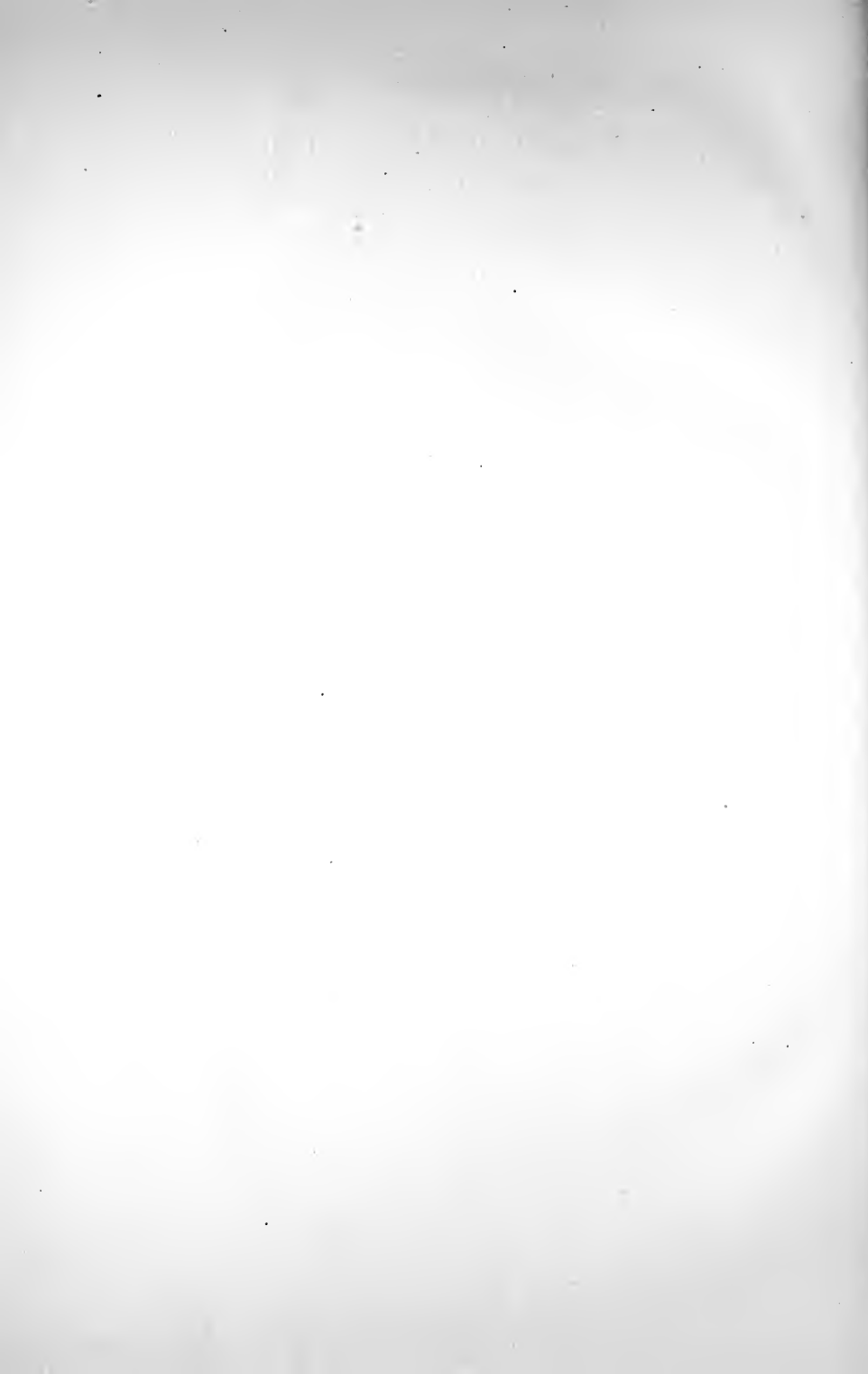
<sup>1</sup> *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century.*

How the deuce you read all those books and escaped to tell us of 'em is a conundrum I shall carry unsolved to my grave. I am very much in the state of mind of the Bretons who revolted against the Revolutionary Government and wrote upon their banners, "Give us back our God!" I suppose I am an intuitionist, and there I mean to stick. I accept the challenge of common-sense and claim to have another faculty, as I should insist that a peony was red, though twenty color-blind men denied it. Your book has fortified me, and one thing in it constantly touched me, namely, that, whatever your belief, and whatever proof you ask before believing, you show much tenderness for whatever is high-minded and sincere, even where you think it mistaken. About most things, I am happy to think, we are agreed. . . .

I sat down to write this letter in entire peace of mind, but had hardly begun it when in came a reporter to "interview" me as one of the presidential electors of Massachusetts, and at intervals since three others have presented themselves. There was a rumor, it seems, that I was going to vote for Tilden. But, in my own judgment, I have no choice, and am bound in honor to vote for Hayes, as the people who chose me expected me to do. They did not choose me because they had confidence in my judgment, but because they thought they knew

what that judgment would be. If I had told them that I should vote for Tilden, they would never have nominated me. It is a plain question of trust. The provoking part of it is that I tried to escape nomination all I could, and only did not decline because I thought it would be making too much fuss over a trifle. . . .

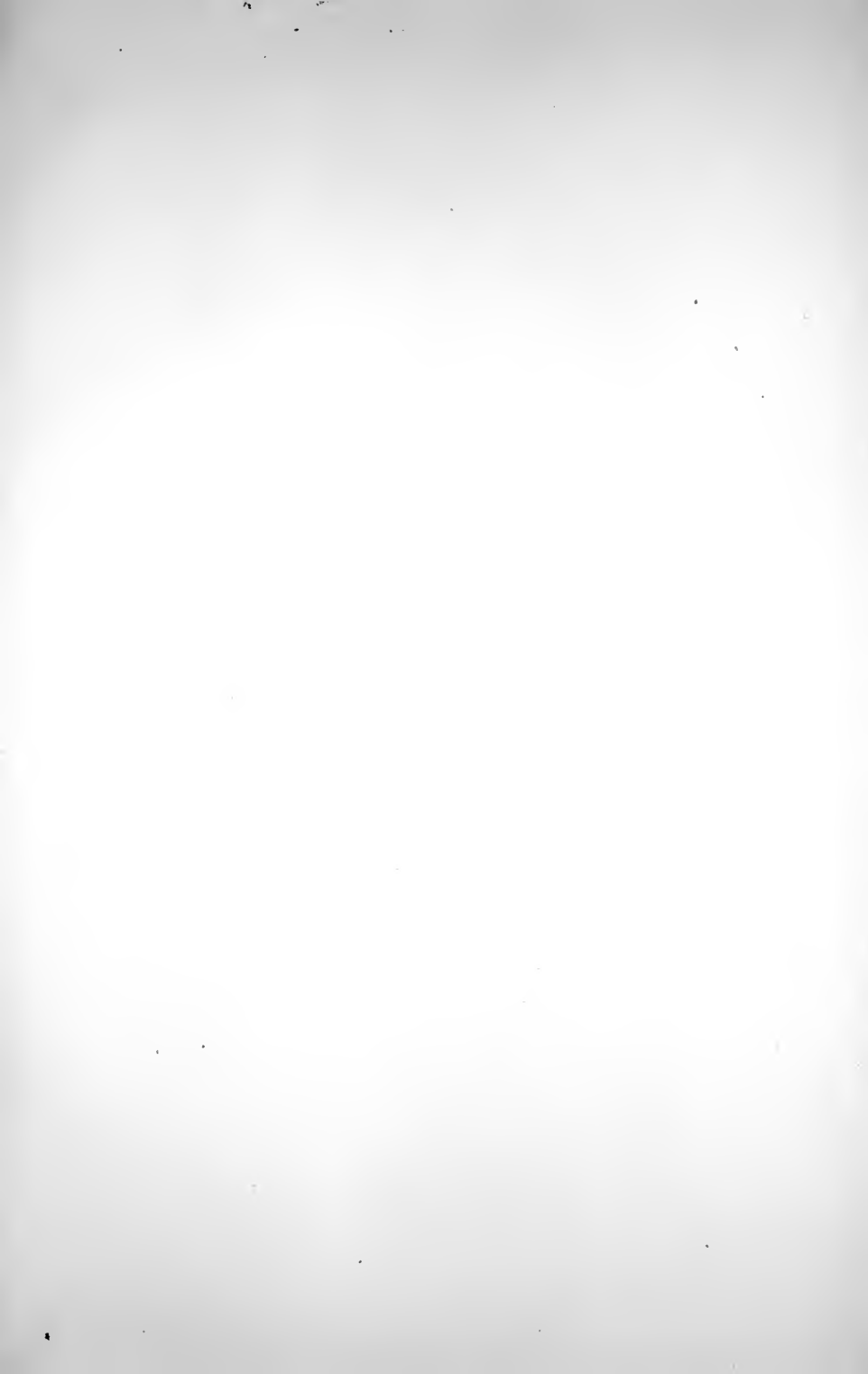
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